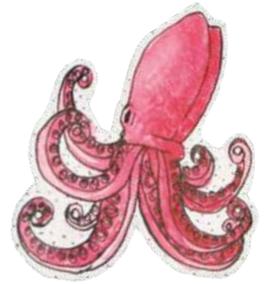


An educator's guide to

You Are Stardust



Created by the dedicated educators at the
Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study Laboratory
School (OISE, University of Toronto)

Appropriate for
K-6 students

Curriculum
strands covered in
this guide include
math, science,
visual arts, social
studies, and
language arts

“ Electricity stronger than lightning powers your every thought, even on those mornings when it's hard to remember where you left your keys! Whether you're stuck in traffic or wrestling a frozen zipper on a winter coat, the simple fact is that you, me, your students, the teen down the street — we are all nature. Every tiny atom in our bodies came from stars that exploded long before we were born.

The examples in *You Are Stardust* are based on current science, and I hope they spark lots of lively discussion in your classroom. But please don't worry if you can't explain all the concepts — the goal of the book is to inspire those magical, exploratory conversations that happen when life pauses for a moment and you find yourself with a child, sharing a book rich with ideas.

I wrote *You Are Stardust* because I didn't just want to tell kids they are part of nature. I wanted to show them in a more personal way, by linking what happens in their own bodies to what happens in the sky, the ocean, the forests, and to other animals.

You Are Stardust is a celebration. Thank you for sharing it with your students. ”

Happy reading,

Elin Kelsey

Author

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The Path to Inquiry

“From ocean to sky to land and back again, the same water has been quenching thirsts for millions of years.” — *from the book*

What a tantalizing thought! The water that we drink today is the same water prehistoric animals drank when they roamed the earth. This intriguing concept can start students down a path of great discovery that crosses disciplinary areas and explores curriculum concepts. As teachers, we may ask: How do I start my students down the path of inquiry? How do I encourage my students to not only ask questions but also seek out answers?

Inquiry is a dynamic process that “places students’ questions and ideas, rather than solely those of the teacher, at the center of the learning experience” (*Natural Curiosity*, 7). When students’ questions shape the direction of their learning, they become more engaged. The students learn that their ideas, theories, and thoughts are all important in order to build and advance the knowledge of the entire learning community. It is important that both teacher and student realize that all ideas are improvable! Teachers can further facilitate students’ learning by providing a variety of tools, resources, and experiences that enable learners to investigate, reflect, and discuss potential solutions to their own questions about a topic the class is studying.

The inquiry process requires the teacher to be flexible and to facilitate students’ learning and knowledge building rather than transmitting how and what students will be learning. Inquiry means that teachers are continually encouraging students to contribute their ideas and engage in critical thinking and problem solving (see section on Critical Literacy) and rich dialogue.

There are many components of inquiry that make it a rich and rewarding learning experience for both students and teachers. Inquiry imparts within your students essential skill sets that they will use throughout their life. It gives students autonomy over their learning — they become contributors of knowledge and stewards of their community. Through inquiry, students become dedicated to school and begin to see learning and knowledge-building discourse as a gateway to opportunity.

Strategies for Sparking Students’ Curiosity

- Elicit prior knowledge first
- Connect the topic to students’ lives
- Take your class outside
- Engage students in interactive read-alouds
- Pay attention to questions, suggestions, or observations that arise spontaneously
- Provide introductory hands-on experiences
- Revisit related questions or topics of interest from previous lessons

Taken from *Natural Curiosity*, page 15

“What does the author mean when she says, ‘...the same water has been quenching thirsts for millions of years?’”

“We’ve been using the same water for our whole lives. ‘Cause it falls and gets sucked up, it falls and gets sucked up.”

— *grade 1 student*



The Critical Literacy Approach

Critical Literacy is a way of encouraging and empowering the reader to critically examine texts and their meaning, to try to uncover underlying messages, to think analytically about the authors' and illustrators' intentions, and to develop empathy for diverse perspectives. Students bring their previous knowledge, theories, beliefs, and experiences to the page when reading, and Critical Literacy takes this further by allowing them to give voice to this personal background and to use it to further their understanding of new material.

While there are many instructional frameworks to teach Critical Literacy (McLaughlin and DeVoogd, 2004), the aims of this approach are primarily achieved through discourse. Teachers suggest questions that lead to rich discussions with students. This type of approach can work with any subject area, any grade level, and with many different media. The pedagogy is dynamic and adaptable depending on context. Repeated experience with Critical Literacy across many domains nurtures young minds to become increasingly empowered to think more deeply about each new text they encounter and develops students that are poised to take on the challenges of the 21st century.

Inquiry, Critical Literacy, and *You Are Stardust*

You Are Stardust is a book ripe with potential to allow students to contribute their own knowledge and understanding, to see connections between the ideas presented in the book, and to interpret the underlying message. Asking questions such as, "Why do you think Elin and Soyeon created this book? Who did they write it for? What are the messages of the story?" and providing a forum for discussion will allow students to make their own inferences, leading to a much deeper understanding than merely providing them with answers or telling them what to think. A Critical Literacy and Inquiry approach leaves the door open for further wondering and future investigation.

"What are the messages of the story?"

"Nature is like our neighbor."
— grade 4 student

"What does the last line in the book, 'We are all stardust', mean?"

"I think, I start when the Earth was made, we were Sun, and the Sun found little particles in space, and the Sun reflected on them when they got to Earth, when they got to a special place where they were, and the Sun made a big planet and then volcanoes started to dash."
— grade 3 student

How to Proceed

Prior to reading, ask questions to uncover students preconceptions

- What do you think the author means by giving the book the title *You Are Stardust*?
- What do you think the book is going to be about?
- Why do you think Elin and Soyeon created this book?
- Who did they write it for?

Read the book

Read the book aloud to your class without pausing or interruption. Allow the students to experience the book completely first, to enjoy the text and illustrations, and to wonder quietly to themselves as they listen.

Ask questions to promote discourse

On the next page is a list of suggested questions to inspire teachers and promote discussions. There are too many listed here for one discussion time, and there are many more questions that could be asked. In choosing what to focus on, listen to your students and respond to and expand upon their ideas and queries.

Suggested Questions



- What does the author mean by “You are stardust”? How can that be?
- How did what your body is made of come from stars?



- Why does the author say we grow more at night?
- Why does the author say we sprout taller in the spring and summer?



- How does the illustrator portray the idea that the we are made of stardust?
- What are the diamonds?
- Why are the people inside the diamonds?



- Why does the author say we shed more hair in autumn and not in winter?
- Why would you need more hair in winter?



- How does the illustrator use the characters to represent the idea of all life coming from a single cell?
- What does this suggest about evolution, the origins of life, and the history of human beings?



- What does the author mean when she writes “You’ll replace your skin 100 times by the time you turn ten”?
- How does that work?



- Why does the author say that we are drinking the same water as the dinosaurs?
- How can that be?



- Do you think you’ll grow new skeletons throughout your life?
- Why or why not?
- What happens to your skeleton when you get old?



- What does the author mean when she writes “the Earth breathes”?



- Why does the author use the metaphor of “planet You”?
- How is a human like Earth?
- What is the author’s point?
- How does the illustrator convey this in the illustration?



- What does the author mean, when she writes “electricity stronger than lightning powers your every thought”?



- What does the author mean when she writes “We are all connected. We are all nature.”
- How are we all connected?
- What is nature?
- How are we all nature?

Questions for Further Discussion

Conclusion

- What do you think is the main message of the book?
- What are the big ideas that the author and illustrator are trying to convey with this book?
- Is there an environmental message for us?
- What would that be?

Use of Emotion

- How do the author and illustrator provoke emotion in the reader?
- How does the use of language in the text and the portrayal of the ideas in the illustrations elicit emotion?
- How does this affect the reader?
- How do you feel reading this book?
- How does this emotion help to convey the message?

Illustrations

- Why do you think the illustrator used dioramas to illustrate the book?

Extensions

- After reading this book, what do you wonder?
- What would you like to learn more about?

Integrated Learning

Integrated learning seeks to make learning “whole.” It allows students and teachers to move seamlessly from one subject area to another as teachers encourage their students to make connections and use skills from multiple subject areas and disciplines.

Acting Today, Shaping Tomorrow recommends that teachers:

“Model and teach environmental education through an integrated approach that promotes collaboration in the development of resources and activities.” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1.2)

So often classroom schedules have defined times outlined for certain subject areas — this gives students the impression that only one subject area or discipline can be contemplated at any one time. Although there are times where we need to focus on a particular task or skill associated with only one curriculum area, as teachers we need to be aware of the larger curriculum and where connections can be made. Molding your classroom environment to incorporate Integrated Learning allows students to gain a deeper appreciation for how skills, ideas, theories, and subject areas connect to each other and the greater community and world that they live in (*Natural Curiosity*, 43).

Integrating Art

In particular, cross-curricular planning that integrates different subjects with the visual arts allows students to fulfill expectations in two or more subjects, while applying the skills they are learning in visual arts to their broader education.

It also allows teachers a wider range of culminating activities through which students can demonstrate understanding of target skills and concepts.

You Are Stardust is a very good vehicle for launching multi-subject projects that fulfill many curricular expectations and provide students with an excellent opportunity to delve deeply into a range of learning in literacy, science, and visual arts. See the charts on the following pages for activity suggestions that will integrate *You Are Stardust* with many curriculum areas.

The author says, “...you grow entirely new skeletons throughout your life.” What do you think about that?

“I think it’s false. Because like our skeleton only grows every two years. Yeah, when we get bigger, our skeleton, our bones just stretch.”

— *grade 3 student*

“See, if I hadn’t read this book, I wouldn’t think that I grew new skeletons, I would think that this hard bone only gets added to. Just like sculptures when we do at school, you’re not allowed to take away, you can only add.”

— *grade 4 student*



Community

Primary

Math: Geometry and Spatial Sense (Grade 2)

Overall Expectation: Compose and decompose 2D and 3D figures.

Activity: Have students identify the shapes that the illustrator has used within the book to represent natural structures.

Ask: What materials and shapes does the illustrator use to construct the pictures? What images do you see? Why has the illustrator chosen to include them on that page? What is a diorama (show students the reverse side of the book's jacket)?

Integration Idea:

Design and build bird feeders to integrate **Math: Geometry and Spatial Sense** with **Science: Growth and Change in Animals**.

Visual Art: Creating and Presenting (Grades 2–6)

Overall Expectation: Apply the creative process to produce a variety of 2D and 3D artworks.

Activity: Have students create a diorama using both 2D and 3D shapes depicting their local community or a specific area in their local community. It might help to do a nature walk with cameras — have students choose an area they want to depict.

Ask: How might our dioramas look different than the ones in the book? Why? Why is your diorama significant to you?

Junior

Social Studies: Links to the World (Grade 6)

Overall Expectation: Use a variety of resources and tools to process and communicate information about the domestic and international effects of links between Canada/US and other areas of the world.

Ask: What images come to mind when you think of your community/the world? Are they different than the ones the illustrator has depicted in *You Are Stardust*? Why do you think that is?

Language Arts: Writing (Grade 5)

Overall Expectation: Generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience.

Activity: Choose a natural or built structure in your community. Write about the benefits of this structure. What is its importance in your community?

Ask: How do natural and built structures affect the land that they are on? Is this a common or uncommon structure across your country/the rest of the world? Why or why not? What structure may replace the one you wrote about in other parts of your country/the world?

Visual Arts: Creating and Presenting (Grades 2–6)

Overall Expectation: Apply the creative process to produce a variety of 2D and 3D artworks.

Activity: Have students create a diorama using both 2D and 3D shapes depicting their local community or a specific area in their local community.

Ask: How might our dioramas look different than the ones in the book? Why? Why is your diorama significant to you?

Integration Idea:

Students can build their dioramas to represent their reaction to the knowledge they gained by reading *You Are Stardust*, in either a concrete or abstract expression. Dioramas could also be more representative of the life systems discussed in the book for integration with **Science: Life Systems**.

How does the illustrator represent the world in this book?

Stewardship

Primary

Visual Arts: Reflecting, Responding, and Analyzing (Grades 2-6)

Overall Expectation: Apply the critical analysis process to communicate feelings, ideas, and understanding in response to artworks and art experiences.

Activity: Have students, using either the dioramas they have made or another related 2D or 3D project, discuss how their work reflects part of the world's life cycle.

Ask: How stable is this cycle? Are there any forces in the world that could threaten this or another part of the cycle? What could we invent to ensure the safety of this part of the cycle/the entire cycle?

Language Arts: Oral Communication (Grade 3)

Overall Expectation: Use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

Activity: Students in groups brainstorm and devise inventions that could serve to help keep our life cycle safe and present their ideas to the class.

How do we go about preserving the many delicate systems that move our world/universe?

Junior

Social Studies: Aspects of Citizenship and Government (Grade 5)

Overall Expectation: Identify concrete examples of how government plays a role in contemporary society and of how the rights of groups and individuals and the responsibilities of citizenship apply to their own lives.

Activity: Explore the community immediately surrounding your school with the intention of looking for systems (built and natural).

Ask: What natural and built systems are present in your community? How do they relate? Is there any evidence of these systems being preserved?

Language Arts: Reading (Grade 6)

Overall Expectation: Read and demonstrate an understanding of a variety of literary, graphic, and informational texts, using a range of strategies to construct meaning.

Activity: Ask students to search websites of newspapers to find articles directly related to their community and efforts to preserve and/or honor the systems in their neighborhood.

Ask: Why is it important to recognize the connections that different systems have within your community? Are these systems under any risk of being destroyed or altered? What would the benefits and disadvantages be if this were to happen? What efforts are already taking place, or have been implemented in the past, to preserve and/or honor a current system?

Visual Arts: Reflecting, Responding, and Analyzing (Grades 2-6)

Overall Expectation: Apply the critical analysis process to communicate feelings, ideas, and understanding in response to artworks and art experiences.

Activity: Have students, using either the dioramas they have made or another related 2D or 3D project, discuss how their work reflects part of the world's life cycle.

Ask: How stable is this cycle? Are there any forces in the world that could threaten this or another part of the cycle? What could we invent to ensure the safety of this part of the cycle/the entire cycle?

Integration Idea:

Take a walk through your local community to help students choose a structure to depict in their diorama. Bring a camera (or have students bring cameras or sketch pads) on the walk to meet **Visual Arts** and **Media Literacy** expectations.

Systems and Interactions

Primary

Science: Understanding Life Systems: Growth and Change in Animals (Grade 2)

Overall Expectation: Assess ways in which animals have an impact on society and the environment and ways in which humans have an impact upon animals and the places where they live.

Activity: Using the notion of “ologies,” students create writing/research projects that are inspired by the subjects or characters in *You Are Stardust*.

Language Arts: Writing (Grade 2)

Overall Expectation: Generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience.

Activity: Students can identify a character and write about a subject from the point of view of that character. Students can expand upon a subject or take the exploration into a new direction.

Remember:

When children have a choice in the subject matter, they are invested in the process and they become immersed in learning!

Junior

Math: Data Management and Probability (Grade 5)

Overall Expectation: Read, describe, and interpret primary and secondary data presented in charts and graphs, including broken-line graphs.

Activity: Allow students to find the connections between humans and nature that exist in both the local community and the greater international community.

Ask: What patterns do you see occurring in nature?

Social Studies: World Connections (Grade 4)

Overall Expectation: Use a variety of resources and tools to determine the influence of physical factors on your country's economy and culture.

Activity: Observe and research the population of local animals within your school yard.

Ask: How do primary and secondary data relate to each other? Why is it important to consult both primary and secondary sources when conducting research?

What are some examples from the book that identify connections between humans and animals?

Integration Idea:

Now that students have experience creating 2D and 3D forms, have them apply their knowledge (in groups or individually) to make a replica structure or their own design. Organize an “invention fair” and invite other classes to view their designs. Students will need to work together to prepare what they are going to say about their invention and how best to communicate their main points. Posters can be created as advertisements for the “fair” and letters can be written inviting classrooms to attend.

About The Laboratory School

The Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study Laboratory School is a Nurser–Grade Six elementary school in downtown Toronto. It is part of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto and has a threefold mandate: teacher education, research, and exemplary education. The school is dedicated to engaging children and their teachers in an educational experience that is enriched, innovative, and compelling. The Laboratory School serves as a setting for observing theoretical and research-based ideas in practice. For more information, please visit www.oise.utoronto.ca/ics.

A special thank you to the educators who developed this guide: Christine Bogert (Teacher Librarian), Andrea Cousineau (Environmental Education Teacher), Cindy Halewood (Grade 2 Teacher), Alex Morley (Special Education Teacher), and Tara Rousseau (Art Teacher).

About Owlkids Books

Owlkids publishes entertaining, unique, high-quality books and magazines that nurture the potential of children and instill in them a love of reading and learning – about themselves and the world around them. With numerous books and three magazines covering various age groups, Owlkids’s publications reach more than one million youngsters and their parents every year. For more information please visit www.owlkids.com and www.owlkidsbooks.com.

Discover more *You Are Stardust* resources online

For a step-by-step diorama how-to, a behind-the-scenes look at the evolution of the book’s artwork from rough sketches to finished pieces, an interview with the author and illustrator, and much more, check out www.owlkidsbooks.com/stardust.



You Are Stardust App

You Are Stardust will soon be available as an app from the App Store. The *You Are Stardust* app enhances the reading experience with dynamic animations, sound effects, a read-to-me option featuring author Elin Kelsey, and the opportunity to build and share a digital diorama.

About the Author and Illustrator of *You Are Stardust*



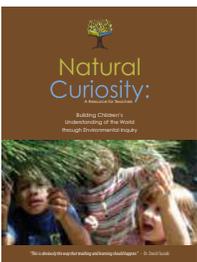
ELIN KELSEY is an internationally respected leader in the field of environmental science and education, as well as the award-winning author of *Not Your Typical Book About The Environment* and other books for children and adults. She consults around the world on environmental projects and is a Research Fellow at the Cairns Institute, James Cook

University in Australia, and an adjunct professor at Royal Roads University. She lives in Pacific Grove, California.



SOYEON KIM is a Toronto-based, Korean-born artist, who specializes in work that merges real-world materials and fine sketching and painting techniques to produce three-dimensional pieces. She is a graduate of the Visual Arts program at York University in Toronto.

List of sources consulted when preparing this guide



The teacher resource *Natural Curiosity: Building Children’s Understanding of the World through Environmental Inquiry* was released in May 2011. It looks at inquiry-based environmental education and demonstrates how Environmental Inquiry can enable teachers to meet, and even exceed, expectations while transforming practice into a more enjoyable,

creative, and productive experience. It is based on a transformative vision of education, one that seeks to develop not only skilled and knowledgeable students but also environmental and socially conscious world citizens. To download your free copy, please visit www.naturalcuriosity.ca.

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Appendix A: What Is Stardust?

All the matter in our universe and ourselves is created from elements on the periodic table – everything! These elements are stardust: forged in stars and spread out throughout our universe. Everything from our breathing planet, with its mountains and oceans, to our own bodies and minds comes from explosions, which have been occurring since the Big Bang, 13 billion years ago.

The Earth and all its inhabitants are the cosmos. The building blocks of life were created and collected over 4.5 billion years ago when the Earth was born. Our planet is not unique. Other planets have been found that fall within the same “Goldilocks Zone” as our own Earth: a place where a planet is just the right distance from a star to be neither too hot nor too cold for life to exist. Water, an essential element of life, has been detected on other planets and in other conditions in space. Our world is an exceptional example of stardust in action and some very good luck.

So what is stardust? It’s a long story, and still in progress, but surprisingly simple. The Big Bang, the intense flash of light, heat, and energy that created the universe, is actually behind stardust creation. Following the Big Bang the universe was intensely hot and energetic. Over 1 billion years, these conditions formed hydrogen and helium, the two most abundant elements. Over time, gravity pulled these elements together into what we call stars. For most of its life, a star fuses hydrogen into helium at very high temperatures and in this way produces energy, causing the star to glow hot and bright. This process lasts for 90% of a star’s life.

Once the star has used up all of its hydrogen, it starts building new elements out of helium. Carbon, nitrogen, oxygen – the basic building blocks of life – are created through nuclear fusion along with other elements like chlorine, potassium, and titanium. When the star begins to produce iron, the fusing process stops and the star begins to cool. As it loses its energy, the star collapses, and as it does it emits the light of 4 billion stars and becomes a supernova. It is the supernova’s massive energy that fuses the rest of the elements on the periodic table. These elements are now stardust, out in space, recollecting into new stars and ending up in galaxies like the Milky Way, in solar systems like ours, on planets like Earth, and in people like you and your students.

By way of this cycle, stardust creates the elements of the periodic table. When we talk about stardust, we are talking about the periodic table, and vice versa. These elements combine together to create water (H₂O), salt (NaCl), and everything we see every day, including ourselves. All the objects in our homes, the people we know, and the animals we love are made from these building blocks, which were created in the intense furnaces that glow in our night sky. In a beautiful cycle, these elements have gathered together to create us, the Earth, and the interconnected systems that guide our lives.



“The author writes that you came from a star that exploded long before you were born. What do you think about that?”

“I think how we got made is we got shot from a star to the ground.”
— grade 1 student

“It’s 100% true. Stardust created our planet, which basically means it created evolution, and it created us, so we are stardust.”
— grade 4 student

“They say we’re all made from stardust, but I know that can’t be true.”
— grade 4 student

“I say – ‘cause this is the actual thing I know about – we turned from ape to cavemen, then to a kind of black hairy guy, then we turned less hairy, less hairy, then we started acting a little weird, then we turned into human beings.”
— grade 3 student

Appendix B: The Importance of Environmental Education and Taking Your Students Outside



Environmental education is “an approach to critical thinking, citizenship, and personal responsibility...” (*Shaping Our Schools, Shaping Our Future*, 10). For students to understand their connection to all living things, they must be given opportunities to connect directly with their environment. Just as important, students must be given the time to reflect on these experiences — both as individuals and within the context of a larger learning community.

Acting Today, Shaping Tomorrow says that “Environmental education stimulates student engagement by focusing on the importance of relationships between action and reflection, local and global issues, and people’s desire’s and needs” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 14). Places and experiences become valuable for students when they can develop a connection to them that they can relate back to their everyday lives. When teachers facilitate these opportunities for their students, the possibility for student growth, engagement, and stewardship is limitless.

There is much learning that can take place outside. It opens the door to a myriad of questions from your students that can connect to multiple curriculum expectations and subject areas (see section on Integrated Learning). It allows students to be creative and to take calculated risks.

In his book *Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louv talks about the essential role that nature plays in a child’s life to help stimulate imagination and inventiveness. He says, “Nature is imperfectly perfect, filled with loose parts and possibilities, with mud and dust, nettles and sky, transcendent hands-on moments and skinned knees” (Louv, 97). The out-of-doors is a place where children can explore their natural surroundings and form a connection to nature and their local community. Making use of these outdoor spaces will open the door to rich learning opportunities where students can use all their senses and learn through doing, exploring, and creating.



“How are we all nature?”

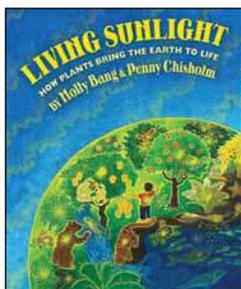
“We are like the flowers, the sun helps us grow, and when we get hot we drink more water, and water helps us grow. And sometimes when you are thirsty you are also hungry and food helps us grow. So basically being hot and sweaty helps you grow.”

— grade 4 student

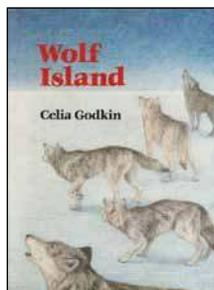


Appendix C: Other Books to Promote Inquiry

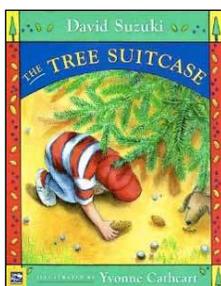
If you and your students enjoyed reading and discussing *You Are Stardust*, you might consider one of these other information story books, recommended by Christine Bogert, teacher-librarian at the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study Laboratory School (OISE, University of Toronto).



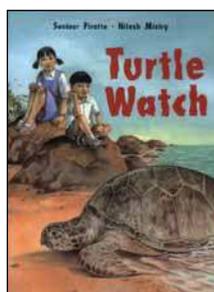
Living Sunlight: How Plants Bring the Earth to Life
By Molly Bang and Penny Chisholm
Blue Sky Press, 2009



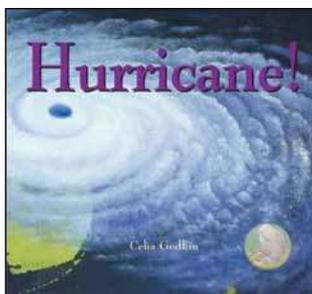
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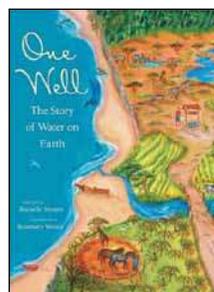
The Tree Suitcase
By David Suzuki
Sommerville, 1999



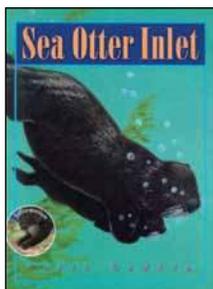
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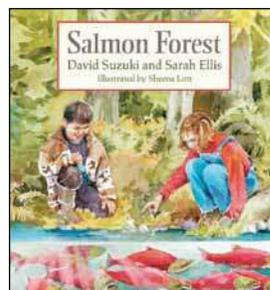
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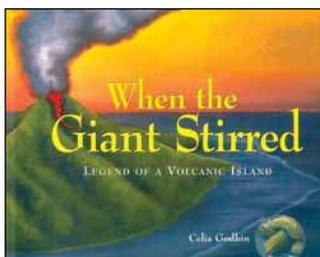
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Illustrated by Rosemary Woods
Kids Can Press, 2007



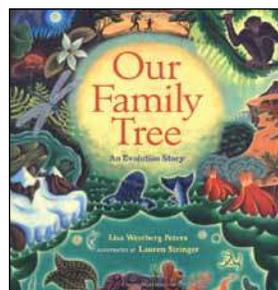
Sea Otter Inlet
By Celia Godkin
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When the Giant Stirred: Legend of a Volcanic Island
By Celia Godkin
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