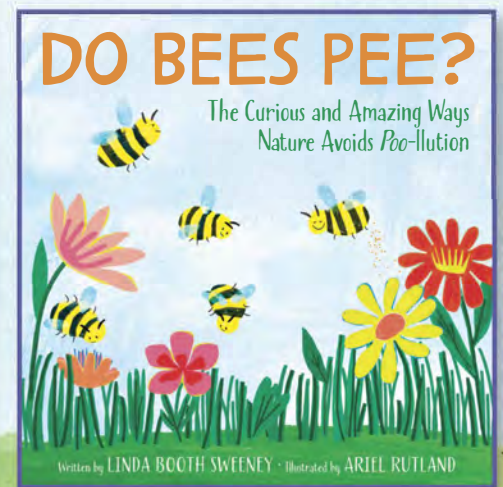
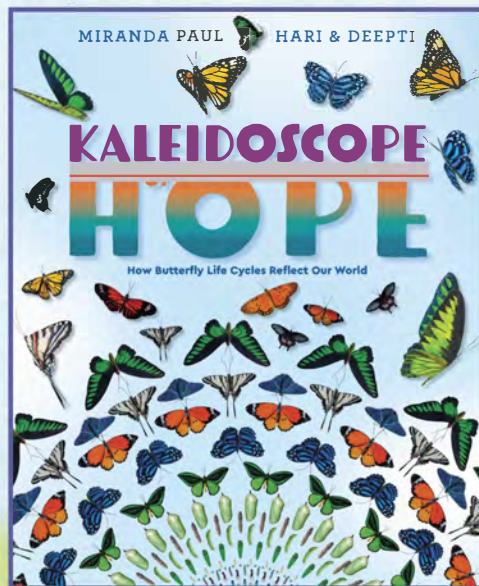
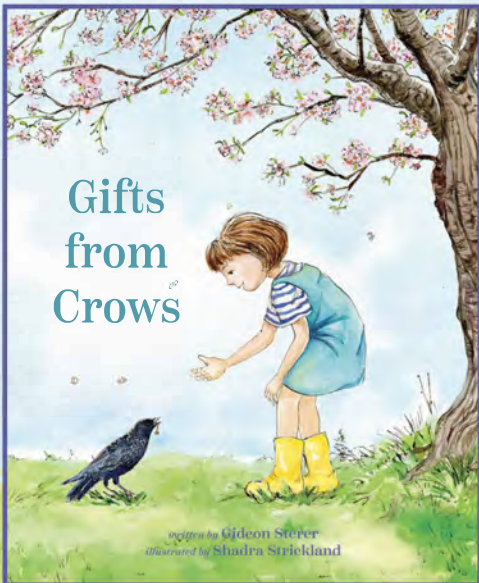


PICTURE THIS: The Great Outdoors

CLASSROOM KIT

Featuring discussion questions, activities,
and tips for planning a classroom unit on
outdoor exploration!





PICTURE THIS: The Great Outdoors

WHY IMPLEMENT A “GREAT OUTDOORS” PICTURE BOOK UNIT?

Exploring the great outdoors is the best way for children and adults alike to engage with nature's beauty and wonder—and reading about the great outdoors is the next best thing! Nonfiction picture books provide knowledge that becomes a foundation for experiential learning. They encourage children to wonder, to ask questions, and to seek answers. The books recommended here showcase a close, personal view of the natural world, providing opportunities to learn about and revisit nature's wonders by introducing readers to new concepts, critters, and creations. The very best books will make readers want to run outside and experience nature firsthand!

PLANNING AND ORGANIZING THE UNIT

The nonfiction picture books in this unit focus on how creatures interact with their natural environment. Introduce each book by showing its cover and the first few pages. Have your students observe and then ask: What do you see? What details do you notice? As a class, predict the book's topic by asking: What do you think this book will be about? Why? Finally, formulate questions by asking: What do you wonder about this topic? Explain that these skills (observing, predicting, and formulating questions) are all behaviors scientists use when studying nature and animals.

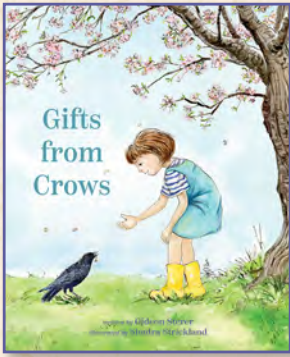
You can also ask specific questions as you read or listen to each book. Did you know that crows are intelligent? Do you think that a bee can pee? Do you know what a group of butterflies is called?

Activate prior knowledge before reading by creating a circle chart or a schema map. Brainstorm facts as a class or draw pictures on sticky notes to show what each student thinks they know about the featured concept or animal. Display their ideas. As you read and discuss each book, highlight the correct facts, update or remove the incorrect facts, and add new facts as you learn more.

After reading these books, plan a Great Outdoors Nature Day. Go outside as a class and search for crows, butterflies, bees, and other creatures from these books. Look for animal habitats and discuss why animals would live there safely. Create a scavenger hunt to locate specific things in nature, such as a pinecone, a smooth rock, a dandelion, and a green leaf. Providing a magnifying glass will encourage students to think like a scientist!

ENCOURAGING OUTDOOR EXPLORATION

These books will surely spark curiosity and excitement about nature. You can build on this by encouraging your students to go outside and explore when they are home. Provide a nature journal for them to draw or write about their outside observations. If students have a camera, they can capture images of nature to share with others. You can even create your own outdoor games or design indoor crafts and activities that require collecting elements from nature (e.g., leaves for printing or rocks for painting). The goal is to encourage kids to explore the great outdoors!



Gifts from Crows

ABOUT THE BOOK

A young girl named Gabi shows kindness to the crows that live in her Puget Sound neighborhood. Over time, they befriend her and reward her kindness by bringing her gifts. The author shares Gabi's story but also includes astonishing facts about people's relationships with crows throughout history and about crows' surprising abilities and intelligence.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read the first page of the story. Do you know where Puget Sound is? As a class, locate Puget Sound on a map.
2. How does Gabi first start to feed the crows?
3. Throughout history, what did people believe about crows?
4. How do the crows first communicate with Gabi?
5. What is special about a crow's brain?
6. What are some surprising things that crows can do?
7. How do you know crows are important to Gabi?
8. How do we know crows are social animals?
9. After Gabi's family sets up a feeding station for the crows, how do they thank her?
10. What kinds of gifts do the crows bring Gabi?
11. What are some other ways that crows show friendship to people?



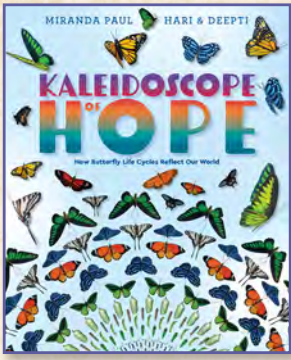
CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Be a Birder. As a class, go outside to watch for birds. Bring a notebook and crayons to write about or draw the birds you see. If possible, use binoculars for closer viewing. After birding, share your findings and try to identify the birds that were seen. Maybe, like Gabi, you will even see a crow! Make a chart of all the birds that were spotted outside.

Ancient History. As a class, pick an animal and study how it has been perceived throughout history. For example, did you know that cats were revered in ancient Egypt? Or that people in ancient Greece believed snakes could heal because they shed their skin? Use books and online resources for research. Older children can research independently or in small groups.

Gift Shop. Discuss the gifts that the crows brought Gabi. As a class, discuss what small gifts you would love to give and receive. Plan a craft for students to design their own gifts, such as painted rocks, drawings, clay creations, or beaded bracelets. Display the gifts in a "shop" and hold a gift exchange.

For the Birds. Make a simple bird feeder! [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sKIyeeCBL-w>] Start by making a list of materials and then ask students to bring in some items from home (e.g., toilet paper rolls, milk jugs, and water bottles). Each student will make a bird feeder they can bring home so that, like Gabi, they can feed the birds in their neighborhood. .



Kaleidoscope of Hope: How Butterfly Life Cycles Reflect Our World

ABOUT THE BOOK

A kaleidoscope of color greets readers as they learn about the life cycle of a butterfly, the dangers it faces, and how we can help preserve the butterfly population. The pages alternate between simpler text and denser, fact-filled passages, so readers of all ages can enjoy this book.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read the first page of the book. What do you call a group of butterflies? If possible, show your class a toy kaleidoscope.
2. Why are there so many kinds of butterfly eggs?
3. What happens when the eggs hatch?
4. How do caterpillars change?
5. What is a pupa or a chrysalis?
6. What parts does a butterfly have (e.g., eyes, legs, antennae, proboscis)?
7. What dangers do butterflies face?
8. How can we help butterflies?
9. How do the illustrations match the title?



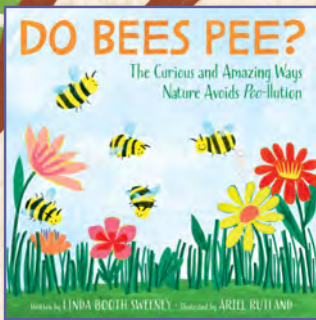
CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Amazing Animals. Discuss how there are unusual names for groups of animals, starting with a kaleidoscope of butterflies. There are many other animal group names, including a murder of crows (making a connection to *Gifts from Crows*), congregation of alligators, parliament of owls, gaggle of geese, and pod of whales. Use resources such as National Geographic Kids [kids.nationalgeographic.com/awesome-8/article/animal-group-names] to introduce others. Each student can then choose one animal group to illustrate and label.

Beautiful Butterflies. Look closely at the butterflies in this book. Introduce the term “symmetry.” How does symmetry apply to butterflies? Give each student a symmetrical outline of a butterfly that folds exactly in the middle of the page. Paint one side of the butterfly, fold the paper in half, and press down on the page for a few seconds. When the paper is unfolded, you will see a beautiful, symmetrical butterfly!

Hope and Help. Discuss the dangers the butterfly population is facing and how the author suggests we can help protect them. As a group, go outside and plant a small butterfly garden or make a butterfly puddle, as described in the book. Keep a class butterfly journal to document any observations.

Flying Colors. Review the book’s illustrations and discuss the many colors of butterflies. Then, go outside for a Color Hunt. Search for butterflies, other insects, and insect eggs. If possible, provide a magnifying glass to allow for close observation of plants and insects. How many colors can you find? Draw what you see or take photos to capture as many colors as you can find.



Do Bees Pee?: The Curious and Amazing Ways Nature Avoids Poo-llution

ABOUT THE BOOK

This silly, informational book focuses on how animal waste actually helps nature. Though the title is giggle-worthy, readers will learn that pee and poo are part of nature's own wonderful recycling system and will be encouraged to think of ways that we can reuse waste in our own environment.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read the title and ask: Do you think bees pee?
2. Read the next two pages. What do you think happens to pee and poo in nature?
3. How do bees help the grass?
4. How does whale poo help the ocean stay healthy?
5. What do dung beetles do with elephant poo?
6. What is special about parrotfish poo?
7. How do tigers use their scat to communicate?
8. How do bats poo?
9. Go to the end of the book. Match the animals with their feces.
10. How do animals help nature stay healthy?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

How Does Your Garden Grow? Read the page "More About Animal Poo and Pee." Discuss how the poo of many animals helps plants grow. The author describes how decomposers, such as earthworms, break down the poo and turn it into plant food. As a class, plant a small garden. Then, dig for earthworms and place them in the garden. Observe the garden daily, looking for worm castings and checking on plant growth.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle! Why is recycling so important? Discuss nature's own recycling system and the role animals play in it. As a class, think of ways you can help recycle at school, such as collecting old crayons, paper scraps, or plastic water bottles. If possible, visit a recycling center to see firsthand how humans can reduce waste in the environment, or share one of these videos.

[<https://youtu.be/TU7Yz97LpsU?si=uPbOCz7c93P8F6em>]

[<https://pbs.org/video/kidvision-vpk-recycle-plant/>]

Create a Compost. Just as animal poo helps sustain nature, humans can use organic materials such as grass clippings and food scraps to help our environment. Introduce your class to composting with the following videos and discuss how to compost at home.

[<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/books/article/create-compost>]

[<https://pbs.org/video/composting-how-it-works-96aqr/>]

Call of Nature. Go on a nature walk with a particular focus on searching for animal waste. Look for bee frass, bird droppings, rabbit pellets, or deer fumets. Discuss the role that animal pee and poo play in helping sustain nature's plants and animals.