

# Learning From Stories



## Target Grade Levels

Kindergarten - Fifth

## Time

One or more class periods, depending on the choice of books.

## Materials

- book from the provided reading list

## Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)

- Science:
  - Make wise choices in the conservation of resources;
  - Describe ways technology influences human capacity to modify the environment;
  - Give examples of scientific discoveries and technological innovations that have shaped the world;
  - Compare ways living organisms depend on each other; and
  - Know that organisms need food, water, light, air, and habitat.
- Language Arts:
  - Listen and talk about experiences;
  - Draw inferences from text and support these conclusions and generalizations with evidence from the text; and
  - Make contributions to small or large group discussions.

## Overview

This exercise uses fiction designed for young children as a basis for lessons about ecology and environmental responsibility. It can be used independently or in conjunction other classroom activities.

## Background Information

Storytelling is a time-honored teaching tool used in many cultures. The storybooks listed below all have environmental themes. They can serve as a starting point for conversations that call on children to synthesize information and experiences and think creatively about themselves and the world around them.

## Procedure

### 1) Vocabulary

- a) ecology
- b) environment
- c) rainforest

### 2) Activities

- a) Choose a book from the following reading list
  - i) *Keepers of the Earth* by Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchac
  - ii) *Chadwick Forever* by Pricilla Cummings
  - iii) *The Violators* by Gunnard Landers
  - iv) *The Great Kapok Tree* by Lynne Cherry
  - v) *The Talking Earth* by Jean Craighea George
  - vi) *Mushroom Center Disaster* by N.M. Bodecker
  - vii) *Alvin Fernald, Superweasel* by Clifford B. Hicks
  - viii) *Canyon Winter* by Walt Morey
  - ix) *Poison Factory* by John Branfield

- x) *Baney's Lake* by Nan Hayden Agle
  - xi) *Beaver Valley* by Walter Dumau Edmonds
  - xii) *Who Really Killed Cock Robin?* by Jean Craighea George
  - xiii) *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss
  - xiv) *If I Built A Village* by Kazue Mizumura
  - xv) *All Upon A Stone* by Jean Craighea George
  - xvi) *The Salamander Room* by Anne Mazer
  - xvii) *Once There Was A Tree* by N. Natali Romanov
  - xviii) *Tree House Town* by Miska Miles
  - xix) *The Wump World* by Bill Peet
- b) Depending on your students' reading level, you may choose to read the story aloud to the class or have children take turns reading.
  - c) Follow up the story by leading children in a conversation about it. Ask questions that challenge their thinking. For example, explore why things happened or people acted in given ways, what changed during the story, how something in the story is alike (or different) from something the child knows or believes. Challenge students to find ways they can use the lesson in the story. For example, what can they do to help save the rain forests, or take care of animals, or help their parents conserve energy?
  - d) Whenever possible, create activities to follow up on the lessons taught by the stories to enhance the experience. Use your imagination. If the story is about industrial pollution, take students for a walk and have them point out smokestacks and other things that might be visible examples.
  - e) Suggested modifications
    - i) For older students, you may wish to assign book reports based on fiction involving environmental themes. Have students present book reports to the class and discuss the environmental messages gleaned from the stories. Following is a list of books you may want to consider for this purpose:
      - (1) *A Most Unusual Lunch* by Robert Bender
      - (2) *Dear Children of the Earth* by Schim Schimmel
      - (3) *California Blue* by David Klass
      - (4) *Covered Bridge* by Brian Doyle
      - (5) *Astrid Spark, Fixologist* by Justin D'Ath.