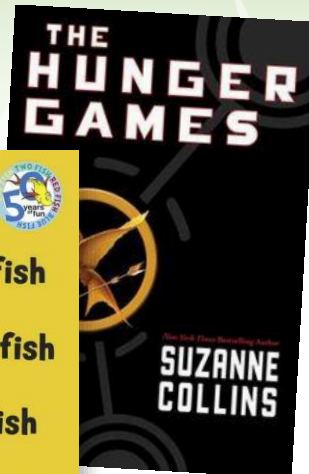
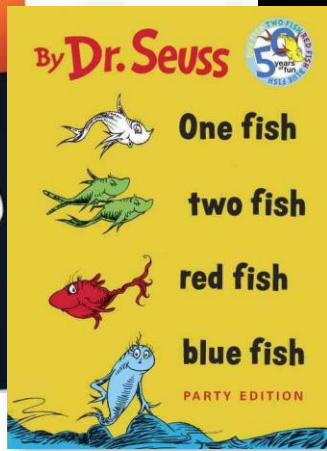
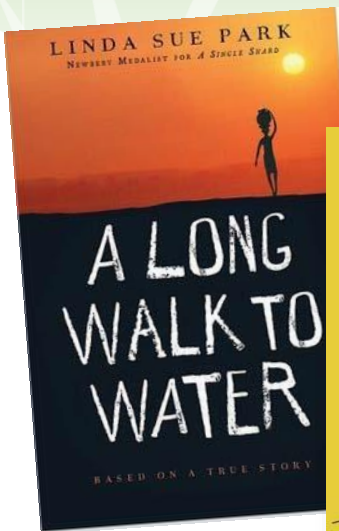


Ecocriticism in & Ecocriticism of Children's/Young Adult (ChYA) Literature

June 25, 2018 | Eckerd College, St. Petersburg, Florida



Why (ChYA) Literature?

Stories are how we humans share information and make sense of the world. Jonathan Gottschall (2012) calls us “the storytelling animal.”

Stories:

-- “Defamiliarize” the familiar (Schlotsky) and jolt us out of mental ruts to rethink what we thought we knew

<http://coursesite.uhcl.edu/HSH/Whitec/terms/D/Defamiliariz.htm>

-- Help us ask “What if?”

-- Play with space and time

-- Are windows/doors into other people, places, times and are mirrors showing us ourselves, for good or ill

-- Can be safe spaces to explore difficult, sensitive topics

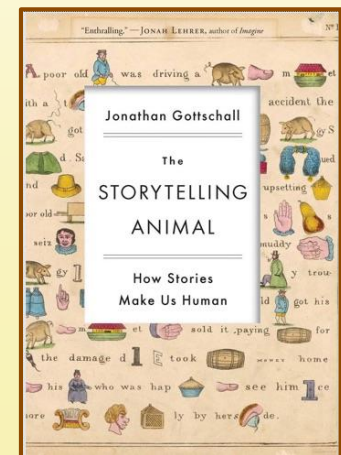
ChYA Lit: More than Just Books

Books, movies, TV shows, video games, music, board games, and more—all are studied as part of the field of children's and young adult (ChYA) literature. **Books take us inside other people's heads**, their times, and their lives; they help us see how other people think/act and why there sometimes are differences between inner and outer lives. **Movies, plays, and video games show us other worlds**, other times, other people—but with less emphasis on their inner thoughts. **Role-playing games ask us to think, speak, and act like someone else.**

Facilitator: Anne W. Anderson, USF Tampa & Eckerd College



Anne works in the Center for Academic Excellence at Eckerd College and is a doctoral candidate at USF Tampa where she taught ChYA literature and writing development. Some of her research can be found in *Children's Literature in Education* (2018), *The Early Reader in Children's Literature and Culture* (Routledge, 2016), and *Creative Approaches to Research* (2015). She has written for Tampa Bay Newspapers and has published two travel guides and a number of children's magazine stories. Contact: awanderson@mail.usf.edu



Ecocriticism: A Tool to Develop Ecoliteracy

Ecoliteracy isn't as much a goal as it is progression along a continuum that grows as we grow. Learning to use ecocritical tools is one way to become and to keep becoming ecoliterate.

Ecoliteracy

“Ecological literacy . . . is a way of thinking about the world in terms of its interdependent natural and human systems, including a consideration of the consequences of human actions and interactions within the natural context. Ecological literacy equips students with the knowledge and competencies necessary to address complex and urgent environmental issues in *an integrated way*.”

-Manitoba Dept. of Education and Advanced Learning

Whose way of thinking?
 Who decides what knowledge, what competencies, and how they are assessed?
 How do different cultures show “profound” respect?
 What about non-living nature?
 Who writes, packages—and sells—the curriculum?

“Education for sustainable living . . . is a pedagogy that facilitates this understanding by teaching the basic principles of ecology, and with them a profound respect for living nature, through an experiential, participatory, and multidisciplinary approach.”

-*Ecological Literacy: Educating Our Children for a Sustainable World*, Edited by Michael K. Stone and Zenobia Barlow

Ecocriticism

Ecoliteracy, like other forms of literacy, depends on one’s stage of development and on who defines its indicators. Ecocriticism, on the other hand, is a tool that helps us grow in becoming ecoliterate. Glotfelty wrote, “[E]cocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (xviii). “The ‘challenge’ for ecocritics is ‘keeping one eye on the ways in which nature is always [...] culturally constructed, and the other on the fact that nature really exists’ (Gerard 10).

Brizee, Allen, et al. “Ecocriticism (1960- Present).” *The Purdue OWL*, 2017. <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/722/13/>



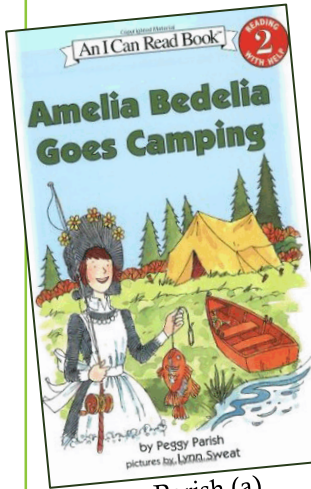
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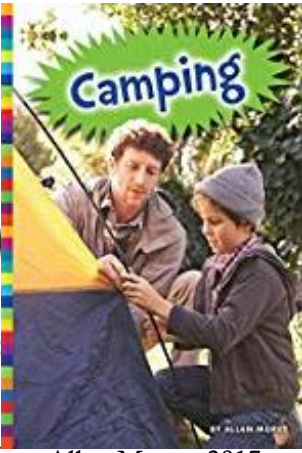
<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/oceans/coral-reefs.htm>

Two culturally constructed views of an ocean floor

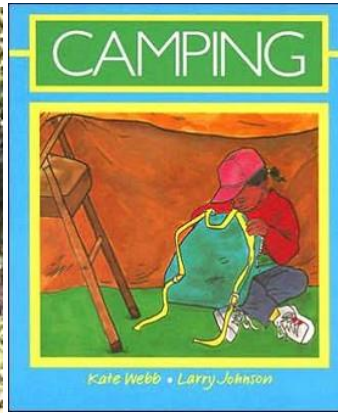
What are the implications of children seeing more images of a cartoon ocean environment than images of a real ocean floor . . . or of never seeing a real ocean? How might this skew their understanding of the natural environment?



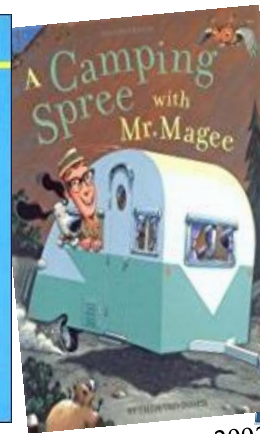
Peggy Parish (a),
Lynn Sweat (i) 2003



Allan Morey, 2017



Kate Webb, 1989



Chris Van Dusen 2003

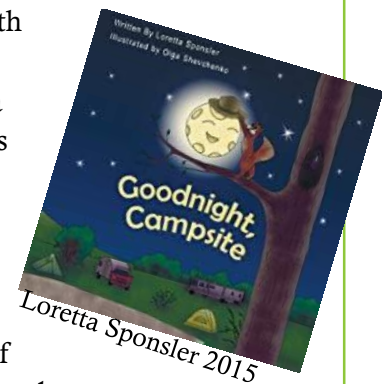


Lenore Look, 2009

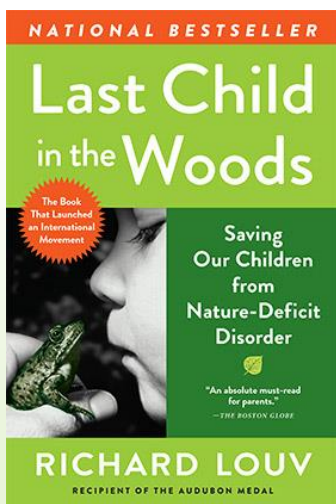
“Do people still *do* that anymore?” Changing Levels of Interaction with the Outdoors

Today we have: Kids who are afraid to step off of the paved trail and walk on a dirt path in a county park. Toddlers who will walk barefoot on concrete but not on grass. Older teens who have never chopped an onion or peeled a potato. Kids who have never dug a hole or gardened . . . except for planting seeds in cups as part of a science lesson. Adults who drive fossil-fuel powered cars to meet in air-conditioned offices to talk about environmental issues.

Can literature help? Natalie Blanchet-Cohen (2008) surveyed 400 children ages 10-13 attending the 2002 International Children’s Environment Conference and found many children “spoke about their limited access to the outdoors” (p. 264). As a result of this limited access, the children gave “increased meaning to . . . television, the Internet and books” (p. 264) in learning about the environment. Specifically, 63% of the children identified the Internet and books as helpful. In follow-up interviews, children identified “books as the preferred medium” (p. 264).



How do we help children/teens ask ecocritical questions of all media?



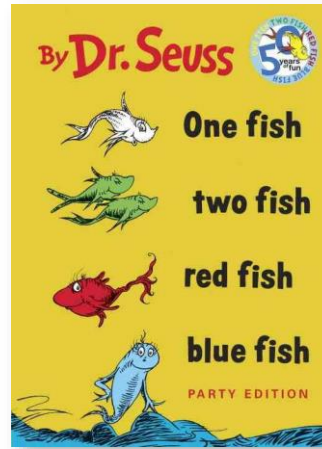
Nature Deficit Disorder?

Richard Louv’s 2005 book *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder* sparked an ongoing conversation about how disconnected children of all ages are from the natural world. From a Publishers Weekly review: “Instead of passing summer months hiking, swimming and telling stories around the campfire, children these days are more likely to attend computer camps or weight-loss camps: as a result, Louv says, they’ve come to think of nature as more of an abstraction than a reality. Indeed, a 2002 British study reported that eight-year-olds could identify Pokémon characters far more easily than they could name “otter, beetle, and oak tree.” <https://www.publishersweekly.com/9781565123915>

Ecocritical Questioning

First Readings: Browse, Dip, Enjoy ... or Not

Children are drawn to particular books for reasons that may have nothing to do with the topic the teacher wants to cover. If possible, use books that interest the young reader to talk about the presence or absence of nature and about environmental issues.



Do fish *really* drive cars in the ocean?!



The Hunger Games is set in both a natural and a man-made environment.

Critical Thinking Skills

Teach children how to ask questions:

- Basic 5Ws and 1H (Who, What, When, Where, Why, How)
- Search backstories, word meanings, possible courses of action, and possible consequences (close reading)

Search patiently and persistently for answers:

- Compare passages within the verbal and visual texts
- Compare other texts (written, drawn, lived) with this text

Create new texts (draw, write, create, act):

- Process what was discovered
- Add to conversation / discussion

Images and Graphics . . .

Complement the Written Text: Visually demonstrate what the text says

Add to the Written Text: The verbal text might only describe the character, but the illustration also shows the setting

Contradict the Written Text: Sometimes because the illustrator didn't read carefully . . . But sometimes because the character says one thing but the author/illustrator wants the reader to know that something else is really happening

Ecocritical Questions

Continuums of Nature:

As present/absent?

As "real" /mediated, artificial, manipulated, virtual?

As urban/rural, suburban, small-town, wild?

As a backdrop/resource/enemy/mother, others?

As dystopian/utopian?

What are the implications in each of these?

Role of child/teen/adult agency

Questions of power

Resources

Books specifically about the environment

Barnes, Laura. "Environmental Novels: Juvenile and Young Adult Fiction." *University Library: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*, 2017. <http://guides.library.illinois.edu/c.php?g=347864&p=2345360>

"Chapter Books to Inspire Young Environmental Activists." *DoingGoodTogether.org*, 2017. <https://www.doinggoodtogether.org/bhf-book-lists/chapter-books-for-environmental-advocates>

"Heal the Earth with these Inspiring Picture Books." *DoingGoodTogether.org*, 2017. <https://www.doinggoodtogether.org/bhf-book-lists/picture-books-for-environmental-advocates>

Short Articles about Eco-Criticism

**Brizee, Allen, et al. "Ecocriticism (1960- Present)." *The Purdue OWL*, 2017. <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/722/13/>

**Mishra, Alok. "EcoCriticism Theory in Literature: Introduction & Analysis." AMishra's, 2017. <https://alok-mishra.net/eco-criticism-theory-literature-introduction-analysis/>

Online Resources

"Educational Opportunities." *Florida State Parks*. <https://www.floridastateparks.org/things-to-do/educational-opportunities>

"Kids in Parks." *National Park Service*. <https://www.nps.gov/kids/index.cfm>

"Links and Resources." *Eco-Fiction.com*. <https://eco-fiction.com/links-and-resources/>

"Traditional Ecological Knowledge." *National Park Service*. <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/tek/index.htm>



References & Further Readings

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- Wynne-Jones, Tim. "Where Is Here Anymore? A Personal Reflection on 'Representing the Environment,' Chapter 3 of *The Environmental Imagination* by Lawrence Buell." *The Lion and the Unicorn*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2011, pp. 118-131.

