

HELLO, EARTH!

Reader's Guide



About the book: *Hello, Earth!* is written as a series of letter poems from the children of Earth to the Earth itself. Each poem touches on a different aspect of how the Earth works, from water cycles to earthquakes to the origin of ocean tides. Throughout the book, the children's voices express curiosity and wonder, and Miren Asiain Lora's illustrations place the reader right in the scene. Nonfiction notes at the back expand on scientific concepts and provide resources for further exploration.

About the Author: Newbery Honor winner Joyce Sidman is one of today's foremost nature poets for children. Accolades for her books include a Sibert Award and two Caldecott Honors. For her celebrated body of work, she won the NCTE Award for Excellence in Poetry for Children. Joyce lives in Minnesota, where she walks daily through the woods with her dog, trying to notice what he notices. Visit joycesidman.com.

About the Illustrator: Miren Asiain Lora is the illustrator of many children's books in the U.S. and in Spain, where she lives. She studied fine art at the University of the Basque Country, and her artwork has been shown in exhibitions around the world. In her illustrations, Miren works to convey the magic of everyday life. Visit miaslo.com.

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING ALOUD

Choose any of these questions to ponder.

Questions to ask before reading:

- Look at the cover of this book: What do you see? What do you think this book is about?
- Are the children and animals on the cover drawn to scale?
- Why do you think the illustrator chose to make them the size she did?
- What do you already know about the Earth? How would you describe it?
- How do you feel about your planet? Why?

Questions to ask as you read:

- Who is speaking in these poems?
- Whom are they speaking to?
- As these poems ask questions, try to imagine how the Earth might answer (perhaps start with the poem "Desert").
- Look closely at one of the illustrations (such as "Water Planet" or "Giants"). Try to find as many details as you can. What kind of feeling does the illustration give you? Why?

Questions to ask after reading:

- Which poem lingers in your mind? Why?
- What was your favorite illustration? Why?
- Did you learn anything about the Earth that surprised you?
- Have your feelings about the Earth changed at all?
- How could you honor the Earth?

ACTIVITIES

Writing

Letter Poem

The poems in this book are called “letter poems” because they are written as messages from one voice to another.

Try writing one:

- Choose an object in the natural world (wind, sunshine, puddle, tree, ant—anything!). If it’s possible, take a field trip outside before you write the poem to observe your object. If your object is small (and doesn’t crawl around!), you can bring it inside before settling down to write.
- Study your object closely: What colors and shapes do you see? How does it feel, smell, or sound? What does it remind you of?
- Think: Why is it important? What is its purpose? How is it beautiful? What have you always wanted to know about it?
- Write a poem addressed to that object.
 - Start with a compliment: *“Dear leaf: your bumpy veins look just like a tiny tree.”*
 - Then ask a question: *“Does the wind tickle you when it blows?”*
 - End with a wish: *“I wish I could live on your branch and whisper leafy secrets to you.”*
 - Feel free to include more than one compliment, question, or wish in your poem.

Nonfiction Note & Illustration

- Find out more about your object. In the case of a leaf, find out how leaves grow, how they help the Earth, and what happens to them in different seasons.
- Write a short paragraph about what you feel are its most amazing aspects.
- Create a drawing to go with your note. If you want, you can combine your poem, nonfiction note, and illustration to create a display.

Cross-Curricular

Big Questions

- Read the poem “Mysteries” and the corresponding note (“New Species”) at the end of the book. Read the list of questions that scientists are currently researching. What questions do you have about the Earth? Which mysteries might you want to solve? What undiscovered areas might you want to explore?
- Find out: choose one particular question, mystery or unexplored place. Find out as much as you can about it. What is still unknown?
- Think hard: imagine you are a scientist. How could you go about solving your question or exploring your mysterious place? What might you find there?
- Write or draw: describe how you will solve your mystery and what you might find out.

Science

Citizen Science

- Choose one of the “citizen science” websites from the back of the book and register to gather data. You can do this with a friend or adult, or with a larger group (of classmates, or instance). You will be helping scientific research with your observations!

- Keep your own log of animals or plants you find in a green space near you. Use a notebook to write down each observation, noting the time, date, and weather. After a couple weeks, look over your notes. Do you notice any patterns? Differences between times of day or weather? Changes that might be seasonal?

How Much Plastic?

Scientists have recently discovered that plastic in the environment never goes away, it just breaks into smaller and smaller pieces, called “microplastics.” Microplastics end up in food and water, endangering the health of all creatures (including us!) Try figuring out how you could reduce your “plastic footprint.”

- Keep a log: write down in a notebook everything you use in a day that is made of plastic.
- Also write down:
 - Which plastic things do I use over and over?
 - Which do I use once and throw away?
 - Which things are truly necessary?
 - Which could I do without?
- Find out: for the plastics you only use once, are there any alternatives? (For instance, a reusable metal water bottle instead of a plastic water bottle.)
- Explore: in what ways could you and your family reduce your use of plastic? Get help at <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/nature/kids-vs-plastic/>

Earth Science

Use *Hello Earth!* as a starting point for in-depth Earth Science study in the classroom or at home. The following topics dovetail well with this book:

- Earth history
- Earth layers
- Sun, Moon, and Earth orbits
- Continents and plate tectonics
- Volcanoes and earthquakes
- The water cycle
- Ocean life
- The importance of plants
- Ecology and conservation

Activities and experiments for elementary-aged kids on these topics can be found on Pinterest or on websites such as www.sciencebuddies.org. The US Dept. of Education also provides at-home activities here: https://www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/science/part_pg7.html#p7.