

THANK YOU, EARTH

A Love Letter to Our Planet

by April Pulley Sayre

Educators' Guide



Grades Preschool—3

About the Book

April Pulley Sayre introduces children to concepts of science, nature, and language arts with stunning photographs and a poetic and layered text. Taken from many perspectives, her vivid, stirring photographs capture elements of nature from up above, down below, close up, and far away. Sayre's spare text invites readers to contemplate, to admire, and to respect our planet. Readers will be inspired to show thanks in their own way and to preserve the earth.

Before Reading

Look up, look down, look all around! Take the class outside and ask the students to look closely at the natural world around them. What colors do they see? Patterns? Shapes? After you return to the classroom, have the students share their observations. Then tell them that April Pulley Sayre did the same thing they did, only she travelled the world to observe nature, took photographs to capture her observations, and put them in a book so that we can see them too.

Discussion Questions

1. Read the opening page, "Dear Earth." Why did the author start the book this way?
2. After reading "Thank you for water and those that float," ask: Where must the author have taken these pictures? Did she take them in the same place?
3. Read "Thank you for mountains and minerals, that strengthen bills and bone." What animals live in the mountains? What minerals help both animals and people?
4. Read "... even fishy whale breath" and ask: Are whales fish? How do they breathe? Why might their breath be fishy?
5. Read "Thank you for curves and prickles and parallels. For patterns—all shapes that repeat" and "Thank you for rays and radials, and overlapping greens." Where can you find patterns in nature?
6. What are the parts of a plant? Which plant parts can we eat?
7. When you are outside, what sounds do you hear? Which sounds come from nature, and which do not?
8. Which season is your favorite? Why?
9. What are some creatures that fly? What are some creatures that crawl?
10. Read "Thank you for sunsets." Where was this photo taken? How do you know?
11. Read "For edges eyes can roam." What do you see when you look at this photograph? Do you think someone carved it this way? You can then explain that it is a natural red sandstone formation from the Arches National Park in Utah.
12. What is the author thankful for? Do you feel the same way? Why or why not?

*Students might need to do extra research by using nonfiction books or the Internet to answer some of these questions.

Classroom Activities

Thank You, Earth Poster Party. Ask the students to think about what they are most thankful for in nature. Have them create “Thank you, Earth” posters. Each poster should display images that are important to the student. They can be photographs, drawings, paintings, or collages. To accompany the images, students should write a “Dear Earth” letter that explains why they are thankful for them. Invite other classes to view the posters. Students can also prepare a presentation in which they share ways to show appreciation for our planet, such as recycling or planting trees.

Smile, Earth! Create a class “Thank You, Earth” book by taking a field trip to a nature preserve. Have students take photos as they explore nature. You can use any type of camera (including disposable, digital, or instant) and students can share the camera(s) until everyone has an opportunity to capture an image. Print or develop the photos and collate them into a class book. Have each student write about why they chose their picture.

Patterns Galore. Have students view the photos in this book, those taken on their field trip to a nature preserve, or photos from the Internet (National Geographic has a great resource at <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/photography/patterns-in-nature/>) to study the patterns in the photo. Then ask students to create a drawing or painting that captures patterns in nature.

Take Action. In the Author’s Note at the end of the book, Sayre includes stories, suggestions, and resources to help students take action to thank the earth and protect it. Explore these with the class and determine a course of action for the class. Some examples are planting wildlife garden, organizing a neighborhood recycling campaign, or writing letters to local leaders or the community newspaper to initiate an activity or event to thank the earth.

Learn More! Discuss which photographs are most interesting to the students. What questions do they have? What would they like to learn about the places and creatures captured in these photos? Ask the students to choose an animal or habitat from the book to research as a class or individually. Use the information on the last page of the book to identify the animals in the photographs and where the pictures were taken.



Photo by Jeff Sayre

About the Author

April Pulley Sayre is the award-winning creator of numerous books for children, including the acclaimed *Raindrops Roll*, *Best in Snow*, and *Full of Fall*. She has traveled many places to investigate, observe, and photograph animals, plants, weather, and the world. The stunning photographs in *Thank You, Earth* illuminate basic concepts of science, language arts, math, and conservation for young earthlings. April Pulley Sayre lives in South Bend, Indiana. You can visit her at www.aprilsayre.com.

