

Mother Earth: Poems to celebrate the wonder of nature

AUTHOR

LIBBY HATHORN

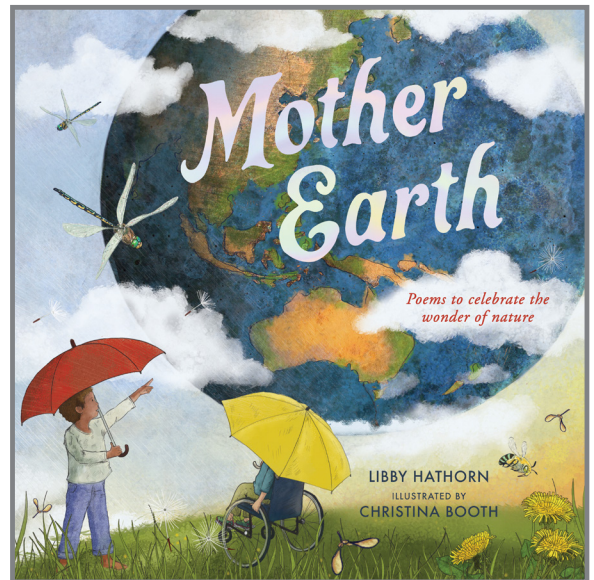
ILLUSTRATOR

CHRISTINA BOOTH

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Primary



SYNOPSIS

*Let's dream of what we can become,
Mother Earth, I am your son.
Food and shelter, climate, water,
Mother Earth, I am your daughter.*

Mother Earth is a warm, funny, beautiful collection of nature poems. Written with great sensitivity by multi-award-winning poet and author Libby Hathorn and with superb illustrations by talented artist and illustrator Christina Booth, this is a book to treasure and to celebrate our precious environment—for kids and families, students and teachers alike.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Libby Hathorn is an award-winning author and poet of more than eighty books for children, young adults and adult readers. Her recent picture book *No! Never!*, written with her daughter Lisa Hathorn-Jarman, won the CBCA Children's Picture Book of the Year Award, Younger Readers, 2021. Translated into several languages and adapted for both stage and screen, her work has won honours in Australia, the United States, Great Britain and Holland. She is the recipient of the ABIA Pixie O'Harris Award, 2022, and the Lady Cutler Award, 2020, for distinguished services to Australian children's literature. In 2014 she won The Alice Award, a national award given to 'a woman who has made a distinguished and long term contribution to Australian literature'. In 2017 she won the Asher Award, a peace prize, for *A Soldier, a Dog and a Boy*.

Libby is a keen educator who has lectured part-time at Sydney University and is devoted to being an ambassador for poetry anywhere and everywhere. She has been a National Ambassador for Reading and often acts as a judge for various literary prizes, including the NSW Premier's Literary Awards.

Find out more about Libby at www.libbyhathorn.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Christina Booth is the award-winning international author and illustrator of over 20 books for children. A CBCA Honour Book Award winner for her picture book *Kip*, Christina has also won numerous Notable Book Awards, and the Environment Award for Children's Literature for her books *Welcome Home*, and *One Careless Night*.

Trained as a teacher and artist, Christina has always loved nature, books, art and reading. She works from her studio on

the small island of lutruwita (Tasmania).

Find out more about Christina at <https://www.christinabooth.com/>.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF NOTES

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright AM operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and is widely published on children's literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. In 2011 she was the recipient of the CBCA (Qld Branch) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Queensland, in 2012 the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Australia, and in 2014, the QWC's Johnno Award. In 2021 she was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia.

STUDY NOTES

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES (HASS)

- This book celebrates the beauty and the intriguing features of nature. It encourages children to observe nature, to reflect on the uniqueness of flora and fauna and to express their feelings about nature in poetic form. Invite students to discuss what aspects of nature they appreciate.
 - Take classes outside the classroom and invite students to look closely at the natural world around them. Discuss what they observe.
- 'Nature-Deficit Disorder' is a term given to the fact that children today are often quite removed from their environment. The amount of time spent watching television or looking at phones and tablets also distracts them from time spent outdoors. This has the effect of making them ignorant of both flora and fauna, and ultimately uncaring about their environment, which has potentially devastating future effects on our global environment. It can also affect their health, and lead to anti-social behaviour. Invite students to discuss how much time they spend in nature. What elements of nature do they enjoy? What distracts them from really appreciating nature?
- The four natural elements considered by western culture to be essential to life are earth, air, fire and water. The ancient Greeks believed that these four elements made up everything. The elements are explored or referred to in several poems, and the title of this book is *Mother Earth*. What symbolism is attached to these four elements? What happens, though, when these elements become unbalanced?
- Several poems reflect on the need for environmental protection, for example, 'Iceberg's Secret: Antarctica' (p 11), 'Planet Earth Needs You For . . .' (p 12), 'Bushfire Baby' (p 18). Invite students to reflect on issues such as pollution, land degradation and climate change. Then invite them to write a poem about one of these topics.
- Current natural disasters are often attributed to climate change which is a hotly contested topic. Research this topic and discuss.
- 'Valley Under the Rock' (p 26) reminds students that First Nations Peoples have a deep connection to Country. As a mark of respect for this understanding and knowledge some Australian place names have had their Indigenous languages names restored to them—Fraser Island is now known by its Batjala name: K'gari, and Ayers Rock has long been known by its Pitjantjatjara name: Uluru. Encourage students to recognise Indigenous words for towns and suburbs and landmarks and to discover their meanings. Research and discuss.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERACY

- Various forms of poetry are included in this book. Choose five poems and identify both the devices used and the themes explored in each poem.
- Give students the following writing prompts and ask them to write a poem using each prompt:
 - 'I went for a walk in the bush and . . .' The poem will evolve into a list of a range of things we might see, hear, feel, touch or smell in the bush.
 - 'After the flood, I . . .' This might contain useful ideas for recovering from a flood and helping one's neighbours.
- Study different forms of poetry. Use the poems in this book as examples of different poetic forms and techniques, and encourage students to experiment with that form or technique, eg. 'Storm Came' (rhyme), 'Tree Planting Rap' (rap).

- Write a poem about nature in acrostic, haiku, cinquain or another form.
- Several words used in these poems are less common than others. Test your students' understanding of these words and their usage.
 - Earthiness (p 2)
 - Coruscant (p 11)
 - Sumptuous (p 14)
 - Curious (p 17)
 - Unique (p 18)
 - Edible (p 23)
 - Toxic (p 25)
 - Descent (p 26)
 - Myriad (p 28)
 - Hobnobbing (p 29)
 - Bountiful (p 30)
 - Ecosystems. (p 30)

Then, write a sentence using one or two of these words.

- Take one of the poems, eg. 'Tree Australia Tree' and see if you can commit it to memory and perform it. You might prefer a shorter poem like 'Bush Picnic' or 'Platypus You!' Do this singly and then in pairs and then as a group. Talk about the differences you hear in each person's recitation.

VISUAL LITERACY

- The cover of a book is an important part of its message. What do the combination of images on the cover suggest to you? Design your own cover for this book.
- The format of the book is square. How does the design and format of the book influence your reading of it?
- The medium or style employed is digital artwork. There is an innocence to the somewhat retro style in which these images are portrayed. The children seem almost timeless and the colour palette is in bold primary colours reminiscent of early readers. Colour or collage a sketch based on one of these images.

CREATIVE ARTS

- Invite students to create a Nature Observation Journal in which they can record interesting facts about nature and draw images as well. When they are exploring nature or simply taking a walk, encourage students to take notes for ideas which might develop into a poem. Simple two-word descriptive observations might even spark an idea.
- Invite students to create a diorama of a particular landscape that each student is familiar with or has enjoyed exploring.
- Create a poster to advertise this book.

AUTHOR OF NOTES

DR ROBYN SHEAHAN-BRIGHT AM