

# Future Teachers Storytelling

E.J. Bahng and John M. Hauptman

Hannah Alff; Margarita Argueta-Naranjo; Jenna Fisher; Julia Franco; Lauren Greiman; Lauren Henninger; Skyler Johnson; Emma Kielion; Kaylee Klaes; Grace Kutz; Lauren Leuschen; Maggie McGrane; Karisa Petermeier; Andrea Roberts; Sage Walrath; Josie Wiersen; and Mallorie Wookey

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# Introduction

E.J. Bahng and John M. Hauptman

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This is the second entry in the [Humanizing Science through STEM and the Arts \(STEAM\)](#) interdisciplinary project. For this series, we collaborated with a cohort of future teachers in a science methods class who were majoring in Early Childhood Education (Kindergarten to 3rd grades).

Together in a circle, each one of us took turns to read aloud parts of “The Three Sisters” chapter in *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. After that, each of us selected another chapter and wrote an inspirational, reflective children’s story and produced a multimedia video clip by reading aloud each story. A total of 17 children’s stories were written along with a read-aloud multimedia video clips linked to our YouTube channel, [Humanizing Science thru STEAM](#).

The U.S. Department of Education advocates “reading aloud to children” as the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading. Reading aloud to a child by a significant narrator (e.g., teacher, caring adult, parent) is also considered as foundational for literacy development. Here are two of the greatest gifts our future teachers give to children around the world: authoring and reading aloud to children.

# 1. Our Earth

Hannah Alff

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Inspired by “An Offering” in *Braiding Sweetgrass*

**Summary:** Alexis is a young girl on her annual family camping trip, her favorite time of year. Through her camping trip, she learns how to show kindness and respect to Earth. She makes a promise to herself to always show respect and kindness to the Earth and to teach others how to do the same.

**Keywords:** Offering, Respect, Ceremony, Earth, Coffee, Canoe

Alexis rolled over in her bed to find her family not in the cabin bedroom. She could smell the sweet smell of pancakes and coffee rolling in from the kitchen. Eagerly, she woke up, rolled out of bed, and walked to the kitchen. She was on her annual camping trip with her family, her favorite time of the year.

As she entered the kitchen, she saw her family. Her mother was over the stove flipping pancakes of all assortments, chocolate chip for her brother and sister, and blueberry for her. Her father was brewing coffee, and her brother and sister were sitting at the kitchen table with grins from ear to ear. The sound of the coffee brewing was her favorite sound. Once the coffee pot beeped the coffee was done brewing and she knew what time it was.

Her family all stood up from the round wooden kitchen table and exited the cabin. They walked towards the lake talking about their plan of canoeing across the lake together. “I call the blue canoe,” her brother shouted, and her family giggled. Walking to the lake, she could hear the sound of the waves crashing upon the rocks and feel the dewy grass between her toes. She never wanted to leave the cabin; it was her favorite place on Earth.

Without a thought her family sat at the end of the dock with their legs dangling towards the water. She could feel the warm sun beaming onto her back. Her father began to pour the coffee

into the lake, as her family watched silently with wide eyes. “We thank you earth, for all you do for us,” her father gently said. They sat quietly for a minute watching the brown coffee disappear into the warm blue lake.

Alexis has always been taught to respect the Earth. Her mother has always taught her “leave this place better than you found it.” So, her family never litters and often makes time to pick up trash outside to save their Earth.

On the way back to the cabin, Alexis curiously asked her parents “why do we pour the coffee into the lake?” Her father replied, “It’s an offering, a way to show respect and to give back to our Earth, our Earth does so much for us so it’s the least that we can do.” This ceremony of respect was so special to her family, and it got Alexis wondering what more she can offer to this Earth.

Alexis made a promise to herself to always show respect to the Earth. She promised to always clean up trash, never litter, and to always offer back to the Earth. Alexis was so thankful that her parents taught her to respect the Earth, and she promised herself to someday teach her children how to respect the Earth with kindness as well.

## 2. Wildfire

Margarita Argueta-Naranjo

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Inspired by “The Sound of Silverbells” in *Braiding Sweetgrass*

**Summary:** In this story, a firefighter recounts his experience growing up near a largely vegetated forest, that one day becomes the place where he must fight. The firefighter shares important rules he grew up remembering, presented to him in school by Smokey Bear. Lastly, he recalls familiar memories of the land, such as camping and hiking.

**Keywords:** vegetation, wildfire, land, rules, and firefighters.

Since I can remember, my parents have brought me to this land to see the endless trees, the shelters, and the water-beauty. We would spend days camping, hiking through vast vegetation, and roasting smores.

Growing up, I was introduced to Smokey Bear, a symbol used to promote forest fire prevention — a mascot. I would think, “I can help protect amazing places if I remember to be careful with fire, and I never play with matches or lighters.”

During our frequent family camping trips, I would make sure our campfire was completely out before leaving every single time.

But what happens when others do not follow these rules?

That is what I am facing today. Knowing that most wildfires are caused by humans, I feel betrayed.

As a walk through the burning vegetation, inhaling air pollutants such as carbon dioxide and black carbon, I cannot help but think about the animals and other living organisms found on this land. Fleeing and burning as the fire expands — consuming everything in its path.



I must protect the land. We must protect the land.

I look up and see helicopters above that are helping in the fight, dropping thousands of gallons of water on the fire.

I exhale a sigh of relief.

Maybe we do stand a chance of winning this fight caused by us.

### 3. The Beauty of Nature

Jenna Fisher

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Inspired by “Title of the book chapter you chose to read” in *Braiding Sweetgrass*

**Summary:** A boy named Anderson who is used to playing video games all day every day gets sent to a weeklong summer camp by his mom. He isn't excited at all and would rather be at home. He drags his feet getting settled into the camp, but then meets a boy named Breccan. Breccan and Anderson go canoeing for the first time, and Anderson realizes the beauty that this camp holds and starts to become excited at other things he'll get to experience at the camp.

**Keywords:** Experiencing the beauty of nature

The story starts at a summer camp with a 9-year-old boy named Anderson. Anderson isn't excited at all to attend the summer camp and only wants to stay inside all day playing video games.

Anderson says to his mom, “Mom, I see nature every single day on the discovery channel. I don't know why I must leave the house to see the same boring things that I always do!”

Anderson's mom says, “Anderson, being at this camp will let you really see what nature is like, not by what the screen shows you. Plus, you'll be able to meet some new kids that you can play with the rest of the summer.”

Anderson replies, “Ugh, whatever. I don't wanna meet anyone or do anything!” His mom says back, “We'll see if you feel that same way after the camp is over. I want you to have fun and enjoy it, Anderson. I'll miss you and I love you. Now off you go.”

Anderson's mom waves goodbye to him as he walks inside the campground gates. Anderson is feeling annoyed that he is being forced to come to a no videogame-no TV-no electronics place for a full WEEK!

After Anderson gets settled in, he goes to the first activity of the day, canoeing. When arriving at the dock, he sees another boy his age who is wearing overalls and is standing barefoot.

Anderson walks over to him while thinking how strange it is for someone to not be wearing shoes. Isn't this boy afraid of mud getting on his feet? "Hi, I'm Anderson. What's your name?" He says to the boy. The boy responds with a goofy smile, "Hi, my name is Breccan. Is this your first time at this camp? I don't recognize you."

Anderson says, "Yeah, my mom is making me come here. I'd rather be at home. I don't even know how to canoe, I've never done it before." Breccan responds, "Oh it's not that hard! We can be partners. I've come here a lot. It's one of my favorite things to do in the summer!" Breccan motions Anderson to follow him to a nearby canoe while Anderson says, "You come here a lot? Don't you get bored?" Breccan replies while waiting for a counselor to come help them settle into their canoe, "No, you'll find out that there's a lot of fun things here to do. Plus, I can show you around!" The boys gather in the canoe while a counselor sits at the front, guiding them on how to steer.

The boys get to the middle of the lake and stop canoeing to take in the scenery around them. Anderson notices the full, thick green pine trees, smells the forestry air and sees all the different wildlife. The boys sit in silence for a minute. Anderson says, "Okay. I'll admit, this view is pretty. Plus, it smells good! It's a lot better graphics than on my iPad." Breccan replies, "I know right? The best part is, that this view never runs out of battery or glitches out. It's always here for you to see." Seeing the beautiful view of the lake changes Anderson's thoughts on how this camp will go. He thinks to himself, "Maybe this camp is a good thing. I might enjoy this week. I'm excited to see what else is in store!"

## 4. The Baby Birds

Julia Franco

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Inspired by “The Council of Pecans” in *Braiding Sweetgrass*

**Summary:** Food is scarce and times have been difficult. A mother robin must make a difficult decision for the future of her three baby birds. She must decide if she is able to care, provide for, and nurture her babies. Food is sometimes hard to find, especially when living in difficult times.

**Keywords:** sunflower hearts, food, new home

Once upon a time, there was a robin. This robin was a mother of three young birds. Her baby birds lost their father not too long ago, so their mother was left to nurture them on her own. Mother and her babies loved to eat sunflower hearts. One day, mother bird told her babies to go out on their own and bring back some sunflower hearts for dinner. Mother bird wants her babies to start to become more independent so that they can one day take care of themselves. Her three babies went out on their own to bring back their dinner. The baby birds flew away from their nest together. They flew about a mile away where they knew they would find the seeds. When the birds arrived, to their surprise, there were no sunflower hearts to be found. They searched in the grass, under the soil, and every place in sight, but they could not find any. They were worried to come back with nothing because they didn't want to disappoint their mother. With no seeds in sight, they flew away empty handed. When they arrived back at their nest, they were nervous to tell mother that they didn't have any seeds. Mother greeted her babies and said, “Hello my darlings, let's see what you brought back for our dinner.” The baby birds replied with sad eyes, “Mother, we looked and looked for the seeds, but we couldn't find any.” Mother looked a bit concerned and then said, “Oh dear, you are sure you looked everywhere?” The babies replied, “Yes, mother. We are so sorry... What are we going to eat now?” Mother said, “Don't worry. I will go find some worms in the dirt. It just rained yesterday, so I am sure there will be some.” Mother flew away from the nest in search of

worms to eat for dinner.

A few minutes later, mother returned with a mouthful of worms. She placed them in the nest, and the four hungry robins gobbled up their dinner not leaving one scrap behind. After dinner, mother put her babies to bed. After they were fast asleep, mother stayed awake worrying about the lack of food. She felt, because she couldn't supply an abundance of food for them, that they would be better off living some place else with a parent that would have more than enough food for them. Mother dozed off to sleep after thinking about this for a couple of hours.

By morning, mother had gone out to find some breakfast before her babies woke up. Mother was unable to find any seeds and was only able to find 3 worms. She returned to the nest and woke up her babies. She told them that they would be having a small breakfast. By the time they were done eating, she had decided about sending her babies away. Mother looked at her babies with very sad eyes. She said, "My darlings, I have some serious news to share with you." One of the babies said, "What is it, Momma?" Mother replied, "There is no more food here. I feel like a terrible mother because a good mother always has food for her babies, and well, I can't find any more food for you. I have made the decision to send all of you together 30 miles away from here. You will start school and have a new home." The babies said, "Oh, momma. What are we going to do without you? We are going to miss you so much!" Mother replied, "I will miss all of you very much, but it is for the best."

Mother helped her babies pack up all their belongings. They then flew out of the nest together. Mother led the way to their new home. When they arrived at their new nest, they were greeted by a friendly robin. They introduced themselves to one another, and then momma and her babies had to say their goodbyes. Mother said, "My darlings, I am going to miss you very much. I love you all, and hope that one day, we are able to be together again." Her babies replied, "We love you momma!" Mother then flew back to her nest. She knew that she had made the right decision to leave her babies in their new home, but she felt so very lonely.

The baby birds were settling into their new home. They were fed a plentiful dinner of nuts, fruit, and seeds. They went to bed with full tummies and thinking of their momma. A couple of weeks passed by. The babies were enjoying school and being fed large meals every day. They missed their momma more than they thought that they would. They asked their new caretakers why their momma couldn't just move in with them. The caretakers said, "Well, I don't see why not." The next day, momma bird came by to visit her babies. When she arrived, she was greeted by her babies. They excitedly shouted, "Momma, Momma! We don't have to be separated anymore! You can move in here with us." Mother was overwhelmed with joy. She

said, “Oh my. It is like my dream has come true.” All six birds ate a bountiful meal together and everyone was happy to be all together again.

## 5. A Good Mom

Lauren Greiman

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Inspired by “A Mother’s Work” in *Braiding Sweetgrass*

**Summary:** A Good Mom is about Jane’s discovery of what it takes to be a good mom. On her walk home from school, she pays attention to the details in Nature around her that remind her of her mother. Along the way, she learns about different animals and plants, and how they mother their children.

**Keywords:** Ducklings, Hatchlings, Stream, Kittens, Tadpoles, Nature

On a Friday in early May, when Jane was walking home from school, she thought about her teacher’s assignment: “Write a paragraph about what makes your mom a good mom.” This assignment was made because Sunday was Mother’s Day, and Jane’s teacher wanted to do something special for the mothers of the students in her class.

Jane walked on the same path that she always took on her way home from school. Except this time, she focused on the small details around her that reminded her of her mom.

Before Jane crossed the street in front of the school yard, she watched as Mr. Walker, the school’s crossing guard, stopped traffic for a duck and her ducklings to cross the road. Jane followed behind and watched closely as the mother duck guided her ducklings to the safe grass on the other side of the road. “She is a good mom,” thought Jane.

After Jane crossed the road, she followed the sidewalk along her regular path, smiling to herself as she thought about the ducklings and their mother. Then, she heard loud chirping sounds coming from a nearby tree. Looking closely, Jane spotted a small nest, where three tiny robin hatchlings were opening and closing their beaks, chirping to the open air. “I wonder where their mother is,” thought Jane. Just in time, a robin flew across the air and landed on the edge of the nest, holding a long, wiggly worm. The hatchlings threw their heads back and opened

their beaks as wide as they could. The robin lowered the worm and dropped it in the hatchlings' mouths. "She is a good mom," thought Jane.

Passing the tree, Jane walked into the grassy land toward the stream near her house. Walking slowly and looking around for more ideas, Jane spotted the neighborhood cat with her two kittens. Jane watched as the cat bathed her babies, making sure not to miss a spot. "She is a good mom," thought Jane.

Finally reaching the stream in the backyard of her house, Jane leapt over the water to the other side. She turned around and looked down into the water at a small toad and her tadpoles. The tadpoles had sprouted their legs and were learning how to hop. Jane watched as the frog hopped once. Her babies hopped behind her. "She is a good mom," thought Jane.

When Jane got home, she ran to her room and quickly got out her notebook and pencil. She titled the paper, "My Mom," and began to write her paragraph.

Jane wrote:

"My mom is a good mom. When I took a walk in Nature after school, I noticed how some animals took care of their children. A mother duck protected and guided her ducklings, a mother robin fed her hatchlings, a mother cat cleaned her kittens, and a mother frog taught her tadpoles how to hop with their new legs. My mom protects and guides me just like the duck. She feeds and cleans me like the robin and the cat. She also teaches me new things like the frog. She is a good mom."



## 6. The Giving Friends

Lauren Henninger

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Inspired by “Epilogue: Returning the Gift” in *Braiding Sweetgrass*

**Summary:** In a small community, Aria is thinking about who means the most to her when she finds a gift that she must give to someone meaningful as part of her community’s tradition. Aria finally decides who to give her gift to, and once she does she gets a great surprise out of it as well.

**Keywords:** Meaningful, Tradition, Community

On a Fall day in a small community, Aria was walking through her school when she found a small present wrapped up in a beautiful bow and packaging.

She saw the package hidden behind a chair. She grabbed the present and started to unwrap it when she saw a tag on it. The tag said “To: someone special.”

Aria looked around confused wondering who the present was for. She looked to the left, looked to the right, and peaked around the corner to see if anyone was looking for it.

Aria did not see anyone around her, so she took the present and put it in her backpack before she went to class.

After school, she went home and took the present out of her backpack. She had remembered that there is a long-standing tradition in her community that around this time of year people give the ones that mean the most to them in their lives a present. They do this to show appreciation towards each other and what they do for each other.

Aria realized that this gift was not meant for her to open but placed there for her to give to someone that is meaningful to her. Aria started to think very hard about who she was going to give this gift to.

She started thinking about everyone in her life that is meaningful to her. Aria thought of her parents, who provide her with a home, food, and everything else she needs.

She thought of her brother and sister, who always play with her and help her when she needs it.

Aria thought of her aunts, uncles, and cousins who always show her love and support.

She also thought of her grandparents who work very hard and take care of her often.

Aria knew that all these people meant a lot to her, and they do so much for her.... but one other person came to mind.

Aria's teacher, Miss Heather, was one of the most caring and kind people that Aria knew. She had helped Aria a lot. Sometimes she does Aria's hair, sometimes she helped Aria make special things for her family, and she even would walk Aria to her grandparents' house after school sometimes.

When Aria thought of all these nice things that Miss Heather had done for her, she decided that she was going to give this meaningful present to Miss Heather.

The next day, Aria got ready for school by packing up her gift for Miss Heather, her backpack, her lunch, and she was on her way to school.

When she got to school, she went straight to Miss Heather's classroom to give her the gift. Aria was shaking with excitement. She knew that this would also mean so much to Miss Heather.

Aria said "Miss Heather, I have something for you to show you how thankful I am for you." She handed her the gift and Miss Heather's eyes filled with tears. Miss Heather said "that is so sweet of you Aria, thank you so much" while bending down to give her a hug.

Aria was calm as soon as Miss Heather gave her a hug. Miss Heather then reached behind her back as she started to pull something out of a bag.

Aria's eyes lit up as Miss Heather started to hand her a box also! Miss Heather said, "my students also mean so much to me and I would like to give each of you a present as well to show my appreciation towards you," Aria smiled.

"Thank you so much Miss Heather, I love you as my teacher," Aria said. Aria and Miss Heather hugged again, and Aria put the box in her backpack.

Later that day, Aria went to her grandparents' house after school and told her grandmother all about her special gift exchange with Miss Heather. Her grandmother said to Aria "I am so glad that you got to experience this special tradition with someone who is meaningful to you."

Aria smiled and said, "me, too, grandma," while giving her a hug.

## 7. Rivers, Rain, Droplets

Skyler Johnson

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Inspired by “Witness to the Rain” in *Braiding Sweetgrass*

**Summary:** In this story, a girl is watching the rain and how it falls. She decides to go out and discover. After exploring she comes back to her mother with questions. She wants to know why droplets are different sizes. She learns about blockades and moisture.

**Keywords:**

- **Moisture:** a small amount of liquid that makes something slightly wet.
- **Blockades:** the closing off of a place to prevent the coming in or going out of people or supplies.
- **Droplets:** a very small drop of a liquid.

It’s a rainy day. My house looks over a river and is next to a forest. I am looking out the window of my house. I wonder why some places collect large amounts of water and some places only collect small amounts. I pull on my yellow polka dot boots. I walk through the damp grass. I slip and lay there a bit. The grass has little droplets. The droplets fit perfectly on the strands, almost like they were meant to be.

I wander out to the river. I look at the water. The drops that hit the body of water are large. How can this be? How can the drops on the grass be so tiny and delicate but these large and bold?

As I walk back to the house I stop at the forest. Can this be right? Can rain come in different sizes? Why does this happen? I step over the first barrier that’s dry. The forest is dry. How can this be. I run back to the house. I open the door and kick my boots off.

My mom is in the kitchen. She has her apron on and is sitting on a bar stool. “In a

hurry, little one?" she says. "Mama the rain, some are small like the droplets on the grass, some large like the rain hitting the river, and some areas there are none like in the forest. I don't understand." Mama grabs me a stool. "The droplets on the grass can only hold so much moisture from the air. The droplets that are hitting the river hold so much moisture that it makes the size much larger. The droplets on the trees are the umbrella for the forest, the rain does not reach the ground because it is blocked by the trees." Different sizes and blockades, if you say so.

## 8. The Garden

Emma Kielion

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Inspired by “Epiphany in the Beans” in *Braiding Sweetgrass*

**Summary:** In this story, we see a glimpse into Daisy’s life through her diary entries. Daisy is a young girl with many friends who have something they are passionate about in their lives. Throughout this story, we follow Daisy on her journey to discovering her true passion in life. Daisy falls in love with something she never thought possible, all thanks to her upbeat science teacher encouraging her to try new things.

**Keywords:** Garden, Vegetables, Love, Diary

Dear diary, here’s the end to another Friday where I feel down in the dumps. Everyone at recess today was talking about their favorite things to do when they go home after school and on the weekends. My best friend Poppy asked me what I like to do for fun, and I just didn’t know what to say. I felt kind of embarrassed because I didn’t have a cool answer like everyone else. Willow likes to play soccer. Holly likes to dance. Lily likes to sing and paint with her sister. Rose likes to watch movies with her family, and Poppy likes to bake with her dad. Don’t get me wrong, there are many things I like to do, but I don’t have a favorite. There isn’t one activity that I LOVE so much that I could do every day and never get sick of. I ended up telling my friends that I like to play board games with my brothers because I just didn’t know what else to say. I felt sad and confused. Hopefully, next week will be better. I start my new science class on Monday, and I am so nervous. I don’t know anyone else in the class, so I am scared I won’t make any friends.

All my love, Daisy

Dear diary, my new science teacher is crazy! She wants everyone to grow a plant... I do not like dirt. Dirt is messy and stinky and icky! Why is she making us grow a stupid plant at home? Why can’t we just do it as a class, so I don’t have to put my hands in stinky dirt? EW!

She is making us grow cucumber plants. I don't even like cucumbers. I mean, I haven't tried one before, but I just know that they probably don't taste good because look at them... they are green. YUCK! Wish me luck because this class is going to be the worst. I can't believe I have to take care of a plant for the next two months. UGH! On the bright side, I did make a friend in my class. Her name is Ivy, and she seems really excited about this whole plant project which is weird, but she seems pretty nice other than that.

All my love, Daisy

Dear Diary, I planted my stinky seeds in my stinky dirt, and I water them every other day, but nothing is happening. Everyone in my class is excited and showing pictures of their sprouts, talking about how tall they are, and I have nothing. When it came time to share my plant's progress, I presented a picture of my dirt. So embarrassing. One boy laughed at me, and my teacher told the class to be nice and that everyone's plants will develop at different times. Ivy told me not to worry about it because all plants are different, and she invited me over to her place for a playdate tomorrow so I could see how she takes care of her plant. After class, my teacher pulled me aside and told me to keep trying with a big smile on her face, and I wanted to cry. I felt like a loser. Why is everyone else's plant growing except for mine? Maybe my plant hates me.

All my love, Daisy

Dear Diary, I finally have a sprout!!! After many tries, I finally have a sprout. After seeing how Ivy takes care of her plants, I think I finally figured it out. Ivy made me realize you have to be like a mom when you take care of plants. She showed me that you need to care and be kind to your seeds in order for them to grow. I felt like I was walking into a fairy garden when I walked into Ivy's backyard. She has plants everywhere and a garden the size of my bedroom at home. It was the most beautiful thing I have ever seen. Ivy and I spent the afternoon helping her mom pick fruits and vegetables from the garden. Then Ivy showed me how to pick the weeds and properly water everything. I was amazed at how much food we collected from the garden. We must've gathered about five buckets overflowing with fruits and vegetables. I was scared to try all the stuff we picked but surprisingly, it was the yummiest food I have ever tried. Who knew fruits and veggies could be so juicy and full of flavor? Not me. Seeing this garden made me want to grow the best cucumber plant in the world. I think I want to start my own garden. Is that crazy? Dirt doesn't seem so stinky and messy to me anymore.

All my love, Daisy

Dear Diary, I haven't written to you in a few months. I'm sorry I have just been so busy with my INSANE garden. After seeing Ivy's garden, I went to the store with my dad and got a bunch of soil and seeds, and he helped me build my own little garden in the backyard. I have been slowly growing this masterpiece over the past few months, and let me tell you, it is A LOT of work. Every day after school, I go out to my garden, and I pull weeds, pick produce, and water everything. My garden is kind of my new best friend. I still love Poppy, but my garden gives me little gifts like cucumbers, carrots, or strawberries. It is the best thing to do after school... hanging out in my garden. Sometimes Poppy and Ivy come over and help me take care of my garden. They are such sweet friends to me.

All my love, Daisy

Dear diary, it's the last day of school!! My science teacher had everyone share their plants' progress one last time. My plant was one of the biggest cucumber plants in the class! I brought one of my giant cucumbers in for the class to taste. The boy who laughed at me at the beginning of the year came up to me and said my cucumber was the best cucumber he's ever tasted. My science teacher jumped with joy as I shared how happy this project made me and how I started an entire garden in my backyard. After class, my science teacher talked with me and told me how proud of me she was for growing such a beautiful plant and realizing that plants are not stinky, messy, icky things that make yucky vegetables. I thanked my teacher for making me try something new because I finally have something I look forward to every day after school. At recess today, my friends talked about what everyone was going to do this summer. Willow is going to play soccer. Holly is going to try tap dance. Lily is going to an art summer camp. Rose is going to watch as many movies as she can, and Poppy is going to make a bake sale. When Poppy asked me what I was going to do this summer, I smiled and said I would keep growing my garden. I finally found something I LOVE so much I could do it every day and never get sick of it. I found my place in this world... my garden.

All my love, Daisy



## 9. The Makings of the Land

Kaylee Klaes

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Inspired by “Skywoman Falling” in *Braiding Sweetgrass*

**Summary:** Kara and her mother go out for picnic when Kara asks her mother how the Earth was created while looking at the pond in the park. Kara’s mother tells her the story she learned from her own mom about the tale of Skywoman. Kara is intrigued by the story and decides she wants to create her own world to take care of.

**Keywords:**

- **Flourish:** to grow or develop in a healthy or vigorous way.
- **Muskrat:** medium-sized rodent native to North America.
- **Glimmer:** shine faintly with a wavering light.
- **Wiser:** having or showing experience, knowledge, and good judgment

One afternoon while playing at home, Kara asked her mom, “Mom, can we please go have a picnic at the park for lunch today?” Kara’s Mom, who loves picnics of course responded enthusiastically to this grand idea.

Kara and her mom packed sandwiches, chips, fruit, and milk and went on their way walking the short distance to the park just down the street from their home.

As Kara and her mom were sitting by the pond eating their sandwiches, Kara asked “Mom do you know how the Earth got created? All the plants and animals?”

“Your grandma told me a story when I was young about how the Earth was created long ago by a woman who was named Skywoman” replied Kara’s mom.

“Please tell me the story mom, please!” Kara exclaimed.

“Okay, I will tell you. I want you to lay back and close your eyes so you can imagine the tale in your head as I tell you the story of Skywoman Falling” said Kara’s mother.

Kara slowly laid down on the blanket just next to her mother’s side, closed her eyes, and relaxed her body for the story.

Her mother began telling her the old tale of Skywoman.

“Before the creation of land, there was a place called the Skyworld where there lived a beautiful creature by the name of Skywoman. From the Skyworld a space opened and down came a glimmer of light through the darkness where no one had seen light before. It was Skywoman falling elegantly through the sky.”

“Wait she was falling out of the sky?!” exclaimed Kara.

Her mother replied, “Just wait and listen to what happens, it will all make sense.”

So, Kara laid back down and continued listening.

Her mother continued...

“Skywoman only saw deep dark waters below her, until she was swept up by geese wings and carried her delicately down to the water where she later rested on a turtle’s shell.”

“The other animals, loons, otters, swans, beavers, and fish knew Skywoman would soon need land for her to call home, just as they called the water their home. The animals discussed with each other how they were going to help Skywoman, and they decided to get her mud from the waters bottom. Many of the animals attempted to dive down to gather the mud, however, they all failed. That was until the little Muskrat decided the help, being the weakest diver among the bunch he took the plunge to gather the mud. After many minutes down, he came back to the surface with a handful of mud that was placed onto the turtle’s back. Skywoman spread the mud across the turtle’s back and placed in the mud the seeds she brought with her from the Skyworld.”

“Wait, but mom how did the seeds only grow in the mud on the turtles back?” asked Kara.

“Well, when the Skywoman came down from the Skyworld, she left a trail of light behind her which allowed the seeds to flourish because seeds need water, sun, space, and air to live.” explained her mother.

Kara nodded in understanding and laid back down.

Her mother finished the story...

“The plants kept growing and growing while Skywoman watched, until eventually, the whole earth was made from just a few seeds. Skywoman knew she did not do this deed herself; she had all the help from the animals and together they formed what was known as Turtle Island, which is now our home.”

Kara sat up quickly, “Mom, so you’re telling me that the entire Earth was created on a turtle’s shell?”

“This is the story your grandmother always told me growing up,” replied her mother.

“Grandma always told me we must listen to the ways of the plants because they came around long before any of us did. We must treat plants and animals with kindness because they are much wiser than we are, and we must learn from them” explained Kara’s mother.

“But mom, how are plants smarter than you and grandma?” asked Kara.

“Well sweetie, these plants and animals that are on Earth have seen and experienced far more than both me and your grandma have,” said her mother.

“Mom, I think I want to be like Skywoman and create my own little world to take care of,” Kara said excitedly.

“I think that sounds like a fantastic idea Kara,” exclaimed her mother, “How do you want to do that?”

“I am going to plant a garden with flowers and vegetable plants and take care of the plants so they can grow and provide for us,” said Kara.

Her mother replied, “That sounds great sweetie, let’s get started.”

Kara and her mother walked back home from their picnic excited to grow a garden and create their own little “world” just as Skywoman did many many years ago.

## 10. The Gift of Hope through Constellations

Grace Kutz

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Inspired by “The Gift of Strawberries” in *Braiding Sweetgrass*

**Summary:** This is a story of a girl who would take a blanket into her backyard and gaze at the stars. During this time, she would talk about stars with her mother. One night when the little girl was older, she realized that the stories her mother told her as a child were valuable life lessons that she had been living throughout her adulthood.

**Keywords:** North Star, Hope, Mother, Constellations

Ever since I was a child, I have loved sitting out under the sky and looking at the stars. My mother would point out different constellations and describe their names and meaning to me. Now that I am older, the constellations are the same, but their meanings have changed. I think back to when I was younger and how the constellation’s meanings have changed and grown just like I have. This story focuses on how I learned the meanings of the stars and how they have since influenced my life and growth into womanhood.

When I was little, I remember taking a blanket out to my backyard and looking at the stars. One night, my mother decided to join me. This night with my mother will always be etched into my mind.

It started like any other night. I looked up at the stars, giving them random names like “Mr. Bright” when my mother came out to the backyard.

When I pointed to the star I had just named, my mother stated, “You know that star’s real name is The North Star.”

I turned my head to look at my mother and said, “Why is it named The North Star?”

My mother replied, “The North Star is a way that travelers used to tell the direction in the night sky. It symbolized the hope of getting to their final destination.”

As a child, this idea did not resonate with me because I simply did not understand how a star could symbolize hope.

When I come home from college, my mother always makes a point for us to sit out under the stars. However, it was not until recently that I was reminded of my mother’s lesson about The North Star as a child.

While sitting out on my family’s back porch, my mother turned to me and asked, “Grace, which star can you always find when you look in the sky at night?”

It took me a moment, but I finally responded, “The North Star.”

“What sets it apart from the rest?” she asked with a questioning look.

I had never thought about why this star was significant until then, “I guess it shines brighter than the other ones around,” I replied.

I had only ever thought of this star practically because of my mom’s lesson as a kid. But finally, as an adult, I understood the symbolism she had described to me as a child, and I finally saw how well The North Star represented my life. In a sense, I was traveling through the night with hope as my North Star.

When I finally understood the lesson from my childhood, I had to tell my mother, “I still remember that little lesson about The North Star, but just now realized I can relate to the symbolization of hope.”

She looked confused, as it had been so long ago. “What are you talking about?” she asked.

“The one night you taught me about the true meaning of The North Star and how I should always have hope in my life,” I told her as we continued looking at the stars.

I had realized that throughout my early life, I had hoped that no matter what challenges I faced, I would be okay.

My mother didn’t realize it when she told me, but she gave me a gift that night, the gift of hope through the constellations.

# 11. The One Called Lily

Lauren Leuschen

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Inspired by “The Consolation of Water Lilies” in *Braiding Sweetgrass*

**Summary:** From the perspective of a water lily, this story explains the different parts of water lilies and how they survive. The water lily tells the story of its late-night thoughts on what it learned from a young girl and her grandmother who visited the lily pond.

**Keywords:**

- **Petiole:** stems that root and pedals of water lilies together.
- **Aerenchyma:** cells found in stems of floating water plants.
- **Rhizome:** a stem that connects to roots and stores the lily’s oxygen to help keep them alive.
- **Pollinate:** transferring pollen from one place to another.

When I opened my eyes, it was hard to put into words what was around me. It was wonderful! I couldn’t see much; everything was bright and blue.

I heard people around, they were talking, laughing, and some were even crying. One of the younger ones was looking at me and smiling. She called me Lily and said I was beautiful!

The young girl ran away for a few moments then returned with an older woman. She called her, grandmother! Grandmother told the younger girl, Susie, that I was a water lily. She seemed to know a lot about me and how I got to where I am. They talked about me for what seemed like hours. Susie and her grandmother left once the sun started to set, but grandmother promised they would come back tomorrow!

When nightfall came, I could not stop thinking about all the thoughts that Susie and her grandmother shared about me.

There was no way I was getting any sleep tonight. The first thought that I had was about how there is a long stem connected to me called a **petiole** that stretches all the way from the bottom of the pond. The petiole is connected to both my roots, which are in the mud of the pond, and to my pedals. Which amazed me, I thought I was just floating here!

I then remembered grandmother talking about how the inside of my stem is packed with spongy white cells that are filled with air. I think she called these air cells **aerenchyma**. Yes, that sounds right, aerenchyma! She said that these cells are only in the stems of floating water plants, which is what I am!

As the sun began to rise, I knew that I have been up all-night thinking about everything Susie and her grandmother talked about.

The one thought that I still cannot wrap my pedals around is how I survive. Grandmother said that I need both light and air, which I am getting here at the surface of the pond. And at the bottom of the pond, I have a living **rhizome** attached that keeps me alive from the oxygen I collect on the surface. The oxygen that I collect travels through a chain that the aerenchyma or the air cells form to deliver all the way down to the rhizome.

The last piece of information that I learned is something that I am not completely looking forward to because I love it up here on the surface. Susie's grandmother mentioned that one of my goals is to attract **pollinators**. After being pollinated, I then bend down back under the water while my seeds mature. Once my seeds have matured, I straighten back up to above the surface and my seeds pop out onto the water.

It all makes sense now; all my family members are in different stages. Some of them are below the surface maturing and others are up here being pollinated with me.

Grandmother had to tell Susie everything she knew about me; I hope they are back today and share more thoughts about everything around me before I bend below the surface for the next couple months.

Oh look, here they are now!

## 12. Throughout the Years

Maggie McGrane

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Inspired by “Witch Hazel” in *Braiding Sweetgrass*

**Summary:** Anna is moving through stages of life without looking back until one day she realizes she had been wishing her life away and looks back on the people and places in her life.

**Keywords:** Memories, Friends, Imagination

Growing up no one talks about moving away from the places and people you call home. When you are young you wish to be older. You wish to be 14 so you can drive. You wish to be 16 so you can drive on your own. You wish to be 18 to be an adult. No one talks about wishing to turn back time to memories that last forever.

At age five Anna moves into a new neighborhood. She moved into the country with her parents. One day, she starts playing with another girl who lives across the street. Everyday Anna and Eve play. They play make believe games and use their imagination to the fullest. Somedays they are spies, teachers, and even scientists.

One day that all changes. Anna becomes older and starts hanging out with friends from school.

Anna has sleepovers with her friends, plays sports, and becomes too old to play outside with her friend Eve.

As Anna enters middle school she does not see Eve outside anymore. Eve has sleepovers with her friends, plays sports, and becomes too old to play outside with her friend Anna.

Anna enters high school. She becomes friends with all different kinds of people. She joins different clubs, sports teams, and does anything she can to not be at home because she thinks she is too old to hang out at home.



It's graduation day. Anna is heading off to college. She is leaving the place she called home for many years behind.

Anna comes home to visit her family over the holidays and dreams about the days she used to play outside without a care in the world.

As Anna grows older she looks back and wishes she could turn back time and enjoy some of her favorite things again. She looks at the yard where she would play ball with her neighbors and wishes to go back to a time when all she cared about was when her mom was going to make her come home.

Anna looks back at the friends she made and the places she had been throughout the years and smiles with tear-filled eyes realizing she had some of the best memories without even realizing it at the time. She had longed for the days ahead, but couldn't help but look back into the past. The people and places she called home.

# 13. Maple Everything

Karisa Petermeier

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Inspired by “Maple Nation: A Citizenship Guide” in *Braiding Sweetgrass*

**Summary:** This story takes place in a small town in Canada, where a little girl and her family are a big part of her community that is known for their maple trees. The father and daughter go on a scavenger hunt to find all the things they use the maple for.

**Keywords:** Composure, Rambunctious, Extravagant

Have you ever wondered where that sweet, savory liquid that you put on your pancakes comes from? It may come from Mapleville. Mapleville is a small town in central Canada, and it is the Maple capital of the world. Here is the story of a little girl and the love for her town!

In the giant country of Canada, there is a small town known as Mapleville. It is the Maple capital of the world. In this small town, there is one family that lives and breathes everything Maple. They are known as the Johnson family. The family is made up of 4 members. The father of the family is Jim, and he is the mayor of the town. His lovely wife is Jennifer, and she is the teacher at Little Maples, the daycare in town. The heart of the family is little Jess who is a rambunctious and curious 7-year-old girl. Last but not least is their new 8-month-old son, Jack!

They are very active in their community, and Jess is always asking her parents questions about the town’s history and all the things going on in Mapleville. One day, Mr. Johnson came home and told the family at dinner that The News was coming into town to interview him about Mapleville. Jess had so many questions, “Are they going to have cameras? What are they going to ask you? What are you going to tell them? Are you going to be on tv?” Mr. Johnson laughed and replied, “Calm down, Jess. This is where I could use your help. I was thinking you could go on a scavenger hunt all around town and find all the different things we use our famous maple trees for.” Jess jumped with joy, “Oh boy! Oh Boy! A scavenger hunt! That sounds like so much

fun!” Mr. Johnson chuckled and said, “I will drive you around after school tomorrow, and we will find all the maple items we can!”

The next day at school, Jess could barely keep her composure waiting for school to get out! When the final bell rang, she jolted out of the class and flew out to the car line to find her dad. She hopped in the car and burst with excitement, “Hurry dad Hurry! Let’s go on a scavenger hunt!” Her father began driving, and they made their first stop at the bakery. When they went inside, the head baker came out to talk to them. “Hey Johnsons! How are you today?” Said the baker. “We are on a scavenger hunt!” Yelled Jess. Then Mr. Johnson asked the baker to explain all the things they use maple for at the bakery. After the bakery, they made their way to the supermarket where Jess was able to roam the aisles and find all the maple treats and uses. She saw maple wood chips, maple candy, maple seasoning, maple firewood, and so much more! After the store they made one the last stop, and it was the most important of them all, they made it to the world’s largest Syrup factory! “Do you know where we are, Jess?” asked her father. “Yes, we are at the most important place in town, the syrup factory” shouted Jess. They took a tour and watched the extravagant process, and Jess was in awe!

When they got home later that night, Jess couldn’t wait to tell her mom what they saw. “We went to the bakery and saw all the donuts and cakes and all the maple goodies, then we went to the supermarket and ran up and down the aisles looking at the maple treats, and last we saw the syrup factory it was so much fun” said Jess.

A little later Mr. Johnson walked in and said, “Well Jess, I think I’m ready for my interview! Thank you for all your help!” But when he turned to look, Jess was fast asleep after her busy afternoon in Mapleville.

## 14. Nora's Big Project

Andrea Roberts

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Inspired by “People of Corn, People of Light” in *Braiding Sweetgrass*

**Summary:** Nora has a big art project to do in school, but when she tries, the project is not what she has in mind! How will Nora create something before time is up?

**Keywords:** project, incorporate, environment, organisms, sluggishly

Nora, a girl from Colorado, woke up to her mother patting her back.

“Wake up. It’s time for school,” Nora’s mom whispered. Nora groaned as she sat up. She sluggishly ate breakfast and got ready for school.

Once Nora got to school, her teacher reminded students that they will be continuing their art projects.

“Hello artists! Remember, you are creating something that is meaningful to you. You can use anything to make your creation, and we will share on Friday,” the teacher exclaimed.

Nora’s favorite thing to do was create. She spent most of her time at home creating artwork to express how she was feeling or to create gifts for her friends and family.

Nora ran over to her best friend, Abby, to share some of the ideas she has for the project.

“Abby! What are you going to make for your project! I’m thinking about making my family! I’ll have my cat, and my mom, and my grandma! I think it’s going to be awesome,” Nora yelled to her friend in excitement.

“I’m just going to draw a picture of my cat.” Abby responded.

“I can’t wait to see it!” Nora said as she began to run to the art supplies.

Nora saw tons of supplies: paint, markers, papers, clay, beads, and more!

She grabbed the clay and started to create her family. But after what felt like hours of trying, her clay statues of her family were not looking good. They wouldn't stand up, they didn't have features like arms, eyes or noses, and she couldn't tell which statue looked like which person!

"I can't do it! They don't look like my family and can't even stand up!" Nora growled as she squished all the clay into one big clump and put it back on the art table with the rest of the supplies.

Nora got another idea. What if she drew her cat just like Abby is drawing her cat? She grabbed the same colored pencils her friend used for her picture and began drawing a cat. While drawing, Nora looked at Abby's drawing and made her cat picture look like Abby's. Once she was done Nora looked at her drawing. It was beautiful! The pencil strokes made her drawing look like it was a real cat with real fur!

Nora thought to herself, "This is so perfect! But it's not my work. I feel sad when looking at it because it's not my idea. I need to do something else." She threw her drawing away to start over.

Just then the teacher rang a bell and said, "Alright artists! The time is up to create our artwork, but we can pick it up again and continue our projects tomorrow."

Throughout the school day, Nora thought about her project. She was out of ideas! She wanted to create something meaningful to her but when she tried, her artwork looked like a pile of mush! How could she create artwork that is original, good, and meaningful to her?

At home, Nora shared her frustration with her mom.

"What am I going to do?" Nora asked.

"Well, I think that as long as you try your best, it will be okay. What do you want to create, again?" Nora's mom responded.

"I wanted to make my family, but I didn't like how it turned out!" Nora yelled.

"Okay, well what if you did something about what you like to do, or what you find interesting? I know you like going outside. Why don't we go on a bike ride to get your mind off of it for a while, and then we can talk about it after?" Nora's mom said.

Nora and her mom put their helmets on and got on their bikes. They rode on a trail leading out of town and into the woodland/prairie land.

As they rode, Nora continued to think about this project. Mom mentioned that she could incorporate things she loved into the artwork, but how? Nora thought about it so much that she didn't notice she was falling behind. After some time, Nora realized she couldn't see her mom anymore! She stopped and yelled for her mom but got no response. She sat on a rock nearby trying to figure out what she should do. There were so many pathways and turns, she could get more lost!

Nora decided to wait until her mom found her. While waiting, she looked around her to see birds flying, insects crawling on the path, and other animals rustling in the bushes.

"Nature really is beautiful." Nora thought, "All the animals seem to get along so well, and they don't copy each other. They just do their own thing: and they are beautiful!"

Nora realized she can use this idea for her artwork! She plucked pieces of grass, bark, leaves, and other items she found while waiting for her mom and put them in her pocket.

Just then her mom rode back and said, "Nora! What happened? Are you okay?"

"I'm okay, mom. But I'm ready to go home." She replied.

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The next day Nora brought all the items she got from her bike ride to school with her idea.

"Good morning! Let's get started on our project. I can't wait to see them!" the teacher said.

Nora pulled out her findings from the night before and glued them onto cardboard to create a forest. She picked up some clay to make some rocks and grabbed colored pencils to draw animals that she saw.

The next day at school, Nora presented her project. She showed her class and said, "I made my project to show how nature works together to create something beautiful. The plants and animals work together while being themselves to live and have good lives. When they work together and are beautiful like that, I like to go outside!" The class and the teacher loved listening to her explain how organisms work together to create a positive environment.

# 15. Dreamy Maple Forest

Sage Walrath

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Inspired by “Maple Sugar Moon” in *Braiding Sweetgrass*

**Summary:** Dreamy Maple Forest is a tale about Fairy king Havok, prince Starling, and magical Maple trees. Starling goes on a long journey to find out the true meaning of the great Maple trees and their role in nature. The true magic of the Maples is in the eye of the beholder.

**Keywords:** Magical, Fairies, Maple, Syrup, Forest, Nature

Once upon a time, there was a great fairy king named Havok. He ruled among the mystical land of Dreamy Maple Forest, where great Maple trees flourished and provided sweet divine sappy nectar for sprites to devour. It was a magical sap that tickled your tongue down to your toes and gave the sprites magical powers beyond belief. The sprites worshiped the Maple trees, planting new seeds, watering their soils, and turning their sweet sap into syrups and sugars for all the land. It was a joyous place for all who inhabited it.

King Havok was fair, and he cared for the fairies living under the protection of the great Maple trees. However, king Havok’s son Starling took the Maple trees for granted. Starling ate all their sugars and drained the great Maples of their sweet divine saps. Despite his father’s warnings, he was careless, and other sprites began to follow his example taking advantage of the magical gifts the great Maple trees provided them: shelter, protection, and life.

The Dreamy Maple Forest began to die, neglected by the fairies taking all the great Maples’ power. As the fairies grew stronger, the Maples grew weaker. There was no more planting of seeds, watering of their soils, or worshiping of the great Maple trees. The fairies were full of greed and took the great Maples for granted. King Havok grew enraged by his son Starlings’ actions and his people. But before he could restore the once magical forest he had created, he

was taken over by the grief of losing his Maple trees. Havok turned the sprites into Maple trees and banished Starling to fix what he had broken.

Time passed, and all the great Maples in the mystical land of Dreamy Maple Forest had died, and so would the sprites trapped in the Maples soon, too, if Starling did not change his ways. There were no longer sweet divine saps left to make sugars and syrups. They would soon all starve and lose all their magic forever. Starling knew he had to change his ways, or the Dreamy Maple Forest that he had once called home would be lost forever.

One day, Starling woke up, looked into the mirror, and decided it was time to make a change. He vowed to restore the Dreamy Maple Forest and save the lives of the fairies he had trapped among the trees. Starling set out on a mission, but he needed help. Going from forest to forest, Starling asked for help from the squirrels, birds, and any other creature he could find. He was determined to restore the land of the Dreamy Maple Forest and promised shelter, protection, and a life full of magic and maple syrup for the rest of their lives. They all agreed joyously and began to help Starling restore the great Maples that once were.

Starling and his new friends began tending to the Maples once Spring began. They worked hard tending the trees, planting seeds, watering their soils, and worshipping the trees as his father had taught him. Once the perfect spring moment struck Starling, he found the scars of where once sap taps had been and screwed in three new taps into each tree in the forest. Placed a bucket underneath to gather all the Maple's sweetness. He stayed up all night boiling the sap over the fire for very little reward in return. He only got one-quarter of syrup out for each bucket he boiled, but Starling would not give up. He vowed to restore the forest if it was the last thing he did.

Two years later... Starling and his friends worked diligently to restore the Dreamy Maple Forest. They had created a new village, built a home for their families, and started making syrup! The Dreamy Maple Forest was again flourishing and full of the magical sweet divine sappy nectar. Havok and the other fairies had long passed by now, but Starling kept his vow and restored the forest. It would never be the magical land of the fairies it once was, but it was his home, and he would never lose it again.

Starling finally learned the true meaning of the great Maples. The Maples remind us of the great gift nature gives us, but only if we are willing to put in the work to appreciate their kindness. Starling had learned this lesson, and he decided to plant thousands of yellow



daffodils among the great Maples to show his gratitude and give to everyone who would tend to the Maples after he was gone.

## 16. On the Banks of the Mohawk River

Josie Wierson

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Inspired by “Putting Down Roots” in *Braiding Sweetgrass*

**Summary:** This story is about the struggle the Mohawk people faced as they were forced from their homes on the Mohawk River valley in New York and relocated to Indian reservations. Their native language and culture began to disappear. What will happen seven generations later?

**Keywords:** Disappear, braids, blended, memories, Kanienkeha

Long ago Mohawk people settled along the Mohawk River valley,

where they would carry bundles of sweetgrass on their backs and plant the sweetgrass along the banks of the river.

Back then the river was full of fish and it fertilized the cornfields each spring as it flooded.

Now the Mohawk people have been replaced by waves of immigrants and the Mohawk River is now flooded with power dams used for electricity.

Today some of the Mohawk people live in small reservations as if they are an endangered species.

The Mohawk culture did not disappear on its own.

The government policy was to deal with them as problems and they were then forced and pushed from the valley in New York to many different locations found around the country.

The Mohawk language and culture was disappearing.

Their braids were cut off and their Native languages forbidden.

Girls were trained to only cook and clean. Boys learned how to play sports and skills such as carpentry, farming, and handling money.

Did the Mohawk people surrender?

The Mohawk people call themselves the Kanienkeha which means People of the Flint and they were not going to give up their language and culture.

Some Mohawk women returned to the valley seven generations later. They are welcoming the sweetgrass back home.

They are reunited as neighbors.

The women share their stories on the banks of the Mohawk River.

Now their Native language, Mohawk, is blended with English.

These old memories the women shared are now creating new stories to be passed onto generations.

# 17. Windigo Lessons

Mallorie Wookey

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Inspired by “Windigo Footprints” in *Braiding Sweetgrass*

**Summary:** Stories told to young Anishinaabe people are more than just scary stories about monsters. They have a deeper meaning. They reflect on today’s issues. This chapter teaches children to be thankful, and refrain from becoming a greedy monster. I would encourage readers to do a lot of self-reflecting during and after this reading.

**Keywords:** Windigo monster, Greedy, Selfish, Suffer, Reality, Grateful

During a cold winter night, as children ate their food around the campfire, they snuggled up close to their families as they tell stories about the Windigo monster.

The Anishinaabe people describe the legendary Windigo monster as a creature that cares more for its own survival than anything else. The monster was greedy and would take more than it needed for it to survive, while watching others suffer without the essentials.

Perhaps Windigo was more than just some monster that lurked around during the wintertime when food was scarce. Perhaps the Windigo monster was a glimpse of reality into the real world.

The stories around the campfire were told to teach children to refrain from being a selfish monster, and instead provide and give back to nature and other people.

Unfortunately, Windigo monsters are all around us in today’s world. Take time to self-reflect on all the things you are grateful for and how you can help those in need.

## Book cover artist: Rachel Leholm

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Rachel Leholm is a student at Iowa State University studying Chemical and Biomedical Engineering originally from Rosemount, MN. She currently works as a peer mentor for incoming Chemical Engineering students, as well as an undergraduate research assistant in a pancreatic cancer treatment lab in Ames. In her spare time, you can find her playing ultimate frisbee, hiking, reading, painting, or watching a movie.

### “Life in a Dimming Sky”

A sight I enjoy is a great sunset. The colors and gradients nature can make is truly astounding, so much so a camera cannot do its beauty justice. When looking at a sunset, I find comfort in feeling small, since my problems are never as big as the dimming sky.

## About the Authors

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