More Picture-Perfect Science Lessons

By Karen Ansberry and Emily Morgan

Using Children's Books to Guide Inquiry, K-4
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# Contents

Foreword ......................................................................................................................................... vii
Preface ............................................................................................................................................. ix
Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................................ xi
About the Authors .......................................................................................................................... xiii
About the Picture-Perfect Science Program ....................................................................................... xv

1 Why Read Picture Books in Science Class? ...................................................................................... 1

2 Reading Aloud ................................................................................................................................ 7

3 Teaching Science Through Inquiry .................................................................................................. 17

4 BSCS 5E Instructional Model ......................................................................................................... 29

5 Connecting to Standards ................................................................................................................ 35

6 Bubbles ......................................................................................................................................... 39
   *Bubble, Bubble and Pop! A Book About Bubbles*

7 How Big Is a Foot? ........................................................................................................................... 45
   *How Big Is a Foot? and How Tall, How Short, How Faraway*

8 Hear Your Heart ............................................................................................................................. 55
   *Hear Your Heart and The Busy Body Book: A Kid’s Guide to Fitness*

9 Loco Beans ..................................................................................................................................... 65
   *Lucas and His Loco Beans: A Bilingual Tale of the Mexican Jumping Bean*

10 Wiggling Worms ............................................................................................................................ 79
   *Diary of a Worm and Wiggling Worms at Work*

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Be a Friend to Trees

Description
Learners explore the variety of products made from trees, the importance of trees as sources of food, shelter, and oxygen for people and animals, and ways to conserve trees.

Suggested Grade Levels: K–2

Lesson Objectives Connecting to the Framework

Science and Engineering Practices
- Obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information

Disciplinary Core Ideas
ESS3.A: Natural Resources
ESS3.C: Human Impacts on Earth Systems
LS1.A: Structure and Function
LS2.A: Interdependent Relationships in Ecosystems

Crosscutting Concepts
- Systems and System Models

Featured Picture Books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Illustrator</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Our Tree Named Steve</td>
<td>Alan Zweibel</td>
<td>David Catrow</td>
<td>G. P. Putnam’s Sons</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Story</td>
<td>In a letter to his children that is both humorous and poignant, a father recounts memories of the role that Steve, the tree in their front yard, has played in their lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be a Friend to Trees</td>
<td>Patricia Lauber</td>
<td>Holly Keller</td>
<td>HarperTrophy</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Non-narrative Information</td>
<td>Discusses the importance of trees as sources of food, oxygen, and other essential things, and gives helpful tips for conserving this important natural resource.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Time Needed

This lesson will take several class periods. Suggested scheduling is as follows:

Day 1: 
Engage with Our Tree Named Steve read aloud.

Day 2: 
Explore/Explain with Sorting Chart and Be a Friend to Trees read aloud.

Day 3: 
Elaborate with My Favorite Tree.

Day 4: 
Evaluate with Be a Friend to Trees Poster.

Materials Per Group of 3–5 Students

Sorting chart made from chart paper with a large Venn diagram drawn on it

Boxes or bins, 1 per group, filled with several of the following tree parts or products (actual objects or pictures of the objects) described in the book Be a Friend to Trees:

From Trees:
- Wooden block
- Writing or construction paper
- Newspaper
- Small cardboard box or paper milk carton
- Apple, orange, pear, cherry, or peach
- Walnut, almond, pecan, or hazelnut in the shell (Check to see if you have students with tree nut allergies in your class, and use only pictures if you do.)
- Small tree branch with leaves
- Pine needles
- Piece of tree bark
- Paper towel
- Paper grocery bag
- Sealed baggie or balloon blown up with air and marked “Oxygen” (This will represent oxygen although it also contains other gases.)

Also include some of the following objects (actual objects or pictures):

Not From Trees:
- Plastic objects (such as small toys, markers, balls, and containers)
- Metal objects (such as keys, foil, and spoons)
- Glass marble
- Rock
- Small pumpkin, squash, carrot, or potato
- Cotton, polyester, or nylon cloth
- Reusable net or canvas grocery bag
- Sealed baggie blown up with air and marked “Carbon Dioxide” (This will represent carbon dioxide although it contains other gases.)
Both:

- Pencil with eraser
- Plastic bottle of maple syrup
- Chocolate in a foil wrapper

Materials Per Student for My Favorite Tree Activity

- Crayon with the paper removed
- Pencil
- Clipboard (or notebook to use as a writing surface)

Student Pages

- My Favorite Tree journal (4 single-sided pages stapled together)
- Be a Friend to Trees Poster rubric

Background for Teachers

Trees are one of Earth’s most important natural resources. We depend on trees for food and wood products, water and soil conservation, shade, beauty, and, most important, the oxygen they add to the air. It is essential for students to understand and appreciate the importance of trees to humans and all life on Earth, and to realize that their actions can have an impact on trees. In this lesson, students explore our dependence on trees by observing and sorting various products that come from them. After reading about how humans and other animals depend on trees, they also learn a variety of ways that they can be a friend to trees. Nurturing a sense of wonder about trees will encourage students to do more to protect and conserve this vital resource.

Engage

Our Tree Named Steve
Read Aloud

Stop and Jot, Turn and Talk
Before reading the book *Our Tree Named Steve*, engage students by saying, “From where you are sitting, look around and think of everything in this room that might be different if there was no such thing as a tree.” Allow some quiet thinking time, and then have students turn and talk to a neighbor. You may want to have students stop and jot their ideas before sharing with a neighbor.

Inferring

Explain that you have a book to share about a very special tree. Show the cover of *Our Tree Named Steve*, and then introduce the author and illustrator. Ask

- What are you thinking this story is about? Why do you think so?

Synthesizing

Read the book aloud, stopping after page 5 (“…Mom and I got the hint and asked the builder to please save Steve.”) Then ask

- Now what are you thinking this story is about?
You may want to stop at key points in the story to allow students to discuss their thinking about the story’s meaning.

**Questioning**
After reading, draw a large tree trunk on the board or chart paper and label it “Steve.” Ask

- How did the tree get its name? (The youngest daughter couldn’t pronounce “tree” and called it “Steve.”)

You can write the students’ responses to the following two questions as “branches” of the tree. Ask

- How did the family use this special tree when it was alive? (Answers can include: as a swing holder, target, third base, hiding place, jump-rope turner, clothesline, hammock-holder, and sewer-water remover.)

- How did the family use the tree after it blew over in the storm? (They used the wood to build a tree house.)

Then ask

- How did the tree protect the family “to the very end”? (It didn’t fall on their house, the swings, the dog’s house, or the garden.)

**Synthesizing**

- Now what are you thinking the story is about?

- How does the story make you feel?

- Have you ever had a special tree? What made it special?

- What are some ways that trees help us?

**Explore/Explain**

**Sorting Chart and Be a Friend to Trees**

**Read Aloud**

In advance, create boxes or bins filled with an assortment of items that came from trees, items that did not come from trees, and items that contain both wood products and other materials (see materials list). Explain that students will be learning about some of the ways that trees help us by doing a sorting activity and then reading a nonfiction book. Divide students into groups, and distribute to each group a bin and a Sorting Chart made from chart paper with a Venn diagram (two large intersecting circles) drawn on it. Have students label one circle “From Trees,” the other circle “Not From Trees,” and the intersection of the circles “Both.”

Then have groups observe each object carefully, discuss whether or not they think it came from trees and why, and place it in the appropriate circle on the chart. If they are not sure about how an object should be grouped, they can leave it in the bin for now.

Invite students to justify how they sorted the objects. Ask
What are some of the objects you think came from trees? Why do you think so?
What are some of the objects you think did not come from trees? Why do you think so?
Were there any objects you were unsure about? Why?

**Inferring**
Next, show students the cover of the book, *Be a Friend to Trees*. Ask
What do you think this book might be about? Why do you think so?

**Determining Importance**
Tell students that *Be a Friend to Trees* is a nonfiction book that might help them learn which of the objects came from trees. Introduce the author and illustrator of the book, and then explain that, as you read, you want them to listen for any of the items they placed in the “From Trees” circle on their sorting charts. Ask them to signal (raise hand, touch nose, or in some other way) when they hear about one of the objects.

**Questioning**
As you read aloud, stop periodically to question students to check for understanding and build interest. Some suggested questions are

- (p. 10) Look at the diagram. What is the first thing that happens in order to make paper? (Wood chips are cooked with chemicals.)
- (p. 10) What are the wood chips called after they become soggy? (pulp)
- (p. 10) What must be done to the pulp after the water is drained off? (It is dried, flattened, and then rolled into paper.)
- (p. 12) What are the only living things that can make their own food? (green plants)
- (pp. 14–20) What are some of the ways that animals use trees? Turn to a neighbor, and share
an example from the book. (Possible answers include: Many animals eat leaves, bark, buds, and twigs; squirrels and chipmunks gather nuts to eat; bees collect pollen and nectar; birds roost and nest in trees; and deer hide beneath trees.)

1. (p. 21) How do trees help the soil? (They keep it from washing away.)
2. (p. 22) What would happen to people and animals if there were no trees or green plants? (There would be no oxygen in the air, and we couldn't breathe.)
3. (p. 23) Where do trees make food? (in their leaves)
4. (p. 24) What three things do leaves need to make food? (water, carbon dioxide, and sunlight)
5. (pp. 30–32) What are some things you can do to be a friend to trees? (Turn to a neighbor, and share an example from the book. (Answers might include: Use less paper; re-use paper bags; write on both sides of paper; recycle newspaper; and plant a tree.)

After reading, give students the opportunity to return to their Sorting Charts and move any of the objects to a different spot on the chart if necessary. Then discuss what kinds of things come from trees (such as oxygen, fruits, nuts, and wood and paper products) and what kinds of things don't (such as carbon dioxide, vegetables, plastics, metals, cloth, glass, and rocks).

Elaborate

My Favorite Tree

This activity can be done on school grounds, during a field trip to a park or other wooded area, or as a take-home assignment. Take students outside to look closely at a tree. They will each need a copy of the My Favorite Tree journal, a clipboard, a pencil, and a crayon with the paper removed. First, model how to sketch a tree's shape and make careful observations of its leaves and bark.

Then, show students how to do a leaf rubbing:

1. Find a fallen leaf that is still soft, and place it on your clipboard with the rough or vein side up.
2. Place the journal page over the leaf.
3. Gently rub the long side of the crayon over the leaf.

Next, demonstrate how to do a bark rubbing:

1. Pick the part of the bark that you want to make a rubbing of.
2. Place the journal page over that part.
3. Gently rub the long side of the crayon over the bark.

Next, model some of your own wonderings about the tree. (For example: How old is this tree? I wonder who planted it. I wonder if an animal lives in this hollow part. What kind of tree is it?)

Finally, share your thoughts and feelings about the tree by explaining why you chose the tree for your journal. (For example: This is my favorite tree because the bark peels up in places and looks like paper. I like how I can fit my arms all the way around the trunk. I have never seen a tree like it before. I feel peaceful when I sit with my back leaning against the trunk.)

If this activity is to be done at home, students can take their journals home and complete them with an adult helper. If this activity is to be done at school or on a field trip, allow students to look at several trees before deciding on a favorite to include in their journals. When you return to the
classroom, have students share their journals with each other.

### Evaluate

#### Be a Friend to Trees Poster

**Ask**

- What does it mean to “be a friend to trees?” (to do things that will help protect or conserve trees)
- Why is it important to “be a friend to trees?” (Answers could include: Trees help animals, humans, and the environment in many ways.)

Pass out the Be a Friend to Trees Poster grading rubric. Have students create a 3-2-1 poster summarizing what they have learned about trees and their conservation. Posters should include:

- thorough descriptions of three ways trees are helpful to humans, animals, and the environment,
- two interesting facts about trees, and
- one labeled drawing showing a child being a friend to trees.

For fun and extra credit, students can include their own additional research on trees, or a poem, song, rap, or cheer about being a friend to trees. You can use the rubric to score completed posters and make comments.
Inquiry Place

Have students brainstorm testable or researchable questions such as:

- How can trees be identified?
- How many different kinds of trees are in the schoolyard?
- What will happen to a leaf on a tree if it is covered with paper for a length of time?
- What is the world’s oldest/tallest/thickest tree?
- How is paper made?
- How can we make recycled paper in the classroom?

Then have students select a question to investigate or research as a class, or have groups of students vote on the question they want to investigate as a team. After they make predictions, have them design an experiment or do research to test their predictions. Students can present their findings at a poster session or gallery walk.

More Books to Read

Summary: Three seeds grow into three beautiful trees, each of which serves a different function in nature and for people.

Summary: As the seasons pass, Arnold enjoys a variety of activities as a result of his apple tree. Includes a recipe for apple pie and a description of how an apple cider press works.

Summary: Every year, Pablo’s grandfather decorates a special tree for his birthday.

Summary: While staying with her grandfather who is a logger, Sophie learns about different kinds of trees, what they need to thrive and grow, and how the bigger trees provide shelter for the smaller ones. Her grandfather teaches her that, when harvesting trees, it is important to let the tallest ones stay to drop their seeds and start a new generation. Sophie discovers that, when we take care of the woods, it provides for us for generations to come.

Summary: Shel Silverstein’s poignant story of a boy and a special tree that gives him many things throughout his life.

Summary: This Caldecott award–winning book speaks simply and elegantly of the many pleasures a tree provides.

Summary: While stopping to admire some of the world’s most amazing trees, the Cat in the Hat and friends teach beginning readers how to identify tree species from the shape of their crowns, leaves, lobes, seeds, bark, and fruit. Dr. Seuss–inspired cartoons and verses teach readers about many of the trees common to North America.

Websites

The National Arbor Day Foundation
www.arborday.org

Trees for Life
www.treesforlife.org
My Favorite Tree

By ________________________________

The Shape of My Favorite Tree
Leaf Rubbing From My Favorite Tree

Observations of the leaf: ____________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Observations of the bark:

________________________

_____________________________________________

_____________________________________________

_____________________________________________

_____________________________________________

_____________________________________________
My Favorite Tree cont.

Wonderings about my favorite tree: ____________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Why this is my favorite tree: ____________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Be a Friend to Trees
3-2-1 Poster Rubric

Name: ____________________________________________

Your poster includes:

3 ways trees are helpful to humans, animals, and the environment.

1 2 3

2 interesting facts you learned about trees.

1 2

1 labeled drawing of yourself “being a friend to trees.”

1

For fun and extra credit, you included your own additional research on trees, or a poem, song, rap, or cheer about being a friend to trees.

Total Points_____/6

Comments: ____________________________________________
Index

Note: Page numbers in *italics* refer to tables. Page numbers in **boldface** refer to student activity pages.

### Animals, anthropomorphism of
- x

### Ansberry, K. R.
- 13

### Anticipation guides
- 12, 229

### Art projects. See poster sessions; sketch to stretch

### Ash, Doris
- 19

### Assessment
- 229

### Astronomy. See Stargazers lesson

### Authors
- 8–9
  - questioning the, 14, 82–83
  - questioning the author, 14

### Barman, C. R.
- 231

### Barton, M. L.
- 13

### Be a Friend to Trees
- (Lauber), 2, 109, 112–114

### Be a Friend to Trees lesson
- 109–116
  - background, 111
  - bark rubbing, 114, 119
  - inquiry place, 116
  - leaf rubbing, 114, 118
  - my favorite tree activity, 114–115, 117–120
  - poster session, 115, 121

### Beck, I.
- 14

### Beginning Reading and Writing
- 1

### Billmeyer, R.
- 13

### Biological Sciences Curriculum Study 5E Model. See BSCS 5E Instructional Model

### Biology lessons
- Be a Friend to Trees, 109–116
- Hear Your Heart, 55–61
- Loco Beans, 65–73
- Over in the Ocean, 99–105
- A Sense of Wonder, 213–221
- Wiggling Worms, 79–90

### Book genres
- 4, 230
  - dual-purpose books, 5, 230
  - narrative information books, 4–5, 232
  - non-narrative information books, 4, 232
  - storybooks, 4, 233
  - *See also* nonfiction books; picture books; science books for children

### Books, out-of-print, sources for
- 3

### BSCS 5E Instructional Model
- viii, ix, 4, 29, 230
  - cycle of learning, 31
  - phases, 29–31, 230
  - picture book use in, 31, 34
  - student's role, 33
  - teacher's role, 32

### Bubble, Bubble
- (Mayer), 4, 39, 41

### Bubbles lesson
- 39–43
  - background, 40
  - bubble shapes data table, 44
  - bubble shapes exploration, 41–42
  - bubble solution recipe, 40
  - bubble toy testing, 43
  - inquiry place, 43

### The Busy Body Book: A Kid's Guide to Fitness
- (Rockwell), 55, 58–59

### Chunking
- 12, 229
  - of nonfiction book on magnets, 127

### Classroom inquiry. See inquiry

### Cloze strategy
- 13, 229

### Colburn, A.
- 230, 231, 232, 233

### Constructivism
- 229–230

### Coral Reef Animals
- (Galko), 4, 99, 102–104

### Coral reefs
- See Over in the Ocean lesson

### Determining importance
- 12, 230

### Diary of a Worm
- (Cronin), ix, 79, 87

### Dual-purpose books
- 5, 230

### Duke, N. K.
- 10

### Earthworms. See worms

### Environmental sciences lessons
- Be a Friend to Trees, 109–116
- If You Find a Rock, 157–165
- Over in the Ocean, 99–105
- A Sense of Wonder, 213–221

### First-grade lessons. See Grade 1 lessons

### 5E model of instruction. See BSCS 5E Instructional Model

### Fourth-grade lessons. See Grade 4 lessons

### Genres of books. See book genres

### Geology. See If You Find a Rock lesson

### Glossary
- 229–234

### Goudvis, A.
- 10, 11, 230, 231, 233, 234

### Grade 1 lessons
- Be a Friend to Trees, 109–116
- Bubbles, 39–43
- Hear Your Heart, 55–61
- Mirror Mirror, 147–153
- Over in the Ocean, 99–105
- Roller Coasters, 133–141
- Sunshine on My Shoulders, 169–175
- That Magnetic Dog, 123–129

### Grade 2 lessons
- Be a Friend to Trees, 109–116
- Bubbles, 39–43
- Hear Your Heart, 55–61
- How Big Is a Foot lesson, 45–52
- If You Find a Rock, 157–165
- Imaginative Inventions, 197–204
- Mirror Mirror, 147–153
- Over in the Ocean, 99–105
- Roller Coasters, 133–141
Grade 3 lessons
Be a Friend to Trees, 109–116
How Big Is a Foot, 45–52
If You Find a Rock, 157–165
Imaginative Inventions, 197–204
Loco Beans, 65–73
Roller Coasters, 133–141
A Sense of Wonder, 213–221
Stargazers, 179–186
Wiggling Worms, 79–90

Grade 4 lessons
Be a Friend to Trees, 109–116
How Big Is a Foot, 45–52
If You Find a Rock, 157–165
Imaginative Inventions, 197–204
Loco Beans, 65–73
Roller Coasters, 133–141
A Sense of Wonder, 213–221
Stargazers, 179–186
Wiggling Worms, 79–90

Guided inquiry. See inquiry

Harvey, S., 10, 11, 230, 231, 233, 234

Hear Your Heart lesson, 55–61
anticipation guide, 57, 59–60, 63
background, 56
busy body graph activity, 58–59, 64
cardboard stethoscopes, 57
inquiry place, 60
most valuable point
determination, 58–59, 63–64

Hear Your Heart (Showers), 55
Herber, H., 12
How Big Is a Foot lesson, 45–52
background, 46–47
a better way to measure activity, 51, 54
inquiry place, 52
letter to the king activity, 48, 53
measuring activities, 48–51
measuring with feet activity, 47–48

Illustrators, 8–9
Imaginative Inventions (Harper), 5, 197, 199
Imaginative Inventions lesson, 197–204
background, 198
class ratings of toys, 202–203, 205–206
Frisbee T-chart, 199–200
identifying inventions (stop and jot), 199
improving an invention, 199–200
inquiry place, 204
toy advertising poster, 203–204, 212
Toy Invention Journal, 203–204, 209–211
toy testing activity, 201–202, 208
The Important Book (Brown), 213
Inferring, 11–12, 231

Information resources. See websites
Inquiry, x, 17, 231

Inventions. See Imaginative Inventions lesson

John Muir: America’s Naturalist, 213, 215–216

Kindergarten lessons
Be a Friend to Trees, 109–116
Bubbles, 39–43
Hear Your Heart, 55–61
Mirror Mirror, 147–153
Over in the Ocean, 99–105
Roller Coasters, 133–141
Sunshine on My Shoulders, 169–175
That Magic Dog, 123–129

Kotar, M., 234

Learning cycle, 31, 231
L’Engle, Madeleine, 10
Leo Cockroach, Toy Tester (O’Malley), 197, 200–202
Lesson objectives, National Science Education Standards and, x
Lesson plans, x
Light. See Mirror Mirror lesson;
Sunshine on My Shoulders lesson
Loco Beans lesson, 65–73

article on Mexican jumping beans, 72, 77
background, 66–67
inquiry place, 72
loco-motion investigation, 70–72, 75–76
median, finding the, 70–72, 76
O-W-L mystery object, 67–68, 74
poster session, 72, 78
Spanish vocabulary activity, 68–69
Lucas and His Loco Beans (Winner), 5, 65, 68–69

Magnetic and Nonmagnetic (Royston), 34, 123, 126–127
Magnets, inquiry place example, 25–27
Making connections, 10–11, 231–232
Measurement. See How Big is a Foot
Median, finding the, 70–72, 76
Mexican jumping beans, 65, 66–67, 77
Miller, Debbie, 10
Mirror Mirror lesson, 147–153
background, 148–149
can you see yourself? activity, 150
inquiry place, 153
mirror challenges, 150–151, 154
silly spoons activity, 152, 155–156
Misconceptions (about science), 2–3, 232
Morgan, E., 13
Morrow, L. M., 1
Most valuable point (MVP), 13, 232
Hear Your Heart lesson, 58–59, 63–64
National Research Council (NRC), 19, 231
National Science Education Standards, 35, 232
content standards for grades K-4, 36
lesson objectives and, x, 37
Nonfiction books
narrative information books, 232
non-narrative information books, 4, 232
using the features of, 14–15, 127, 184, 230, 234
O-W-L charts (Observations,
Wonderings, Learnings), 13, 19, 232
for Mexican jumping beans, 74
for stargazing, 184
Our Tree Named Steve (Zweibel), 2, 109, 111–112
Over in the Ocean lesson, 99–105
background, 100–101

Rereading, 14, 233
Rocks: Hard, Soft, Smooth, and Rough (Rosinky), 157, 162–163
Rocks. See If You Find a Rock lesson
Roller Coaster (Frazee), 133, 135–136
Roller Coasters lesson, 133–141
background, 134–135
dropping races, 139, 144
falling objects quiz, 140, 145–146
inquiry place, 141
roller coaster design activity, 136–137, 142–143
sketch to stretch activity, 136
which hits harder activity, 139–140
Science books for children
information resources, 3
out-of-print book sources, 3
Science classes
correcting misconceptions, 2–3
picture-book reading in, 1–6
reading skills and, 2
See also inquiry
Science inquiry. See inquiry
Second-grade lessons. See Grade 2 lessons
A Sense of Wonder lesson, 213–221
background, 214–215
comparing Muir and Carson, 218–220, 226–227
The Important Thing activity, 220, 228
inquiry place, 221
My Nature Journal, 216–218, 222–225
Sketch to stretch, 14, 233
Spanish language
vocabulary, 68
website on worms (for children), 90
Spots of Light: A Book About Stars (Rau), 179, 183–184
Standards. See National Science Education Standards
Stargazers lesson, 179–186
background, 180–181
constellations, 184–185, 190–191
O-W-L chart, 183
Stargazers Lift-the-Flap Book, 185–186, 192–195
stargazing at home activity, 182–183, 188–189
Stop and jot, 14, 233
identifying inventions, 199
Storybooks, 4, 233
Strickland, D. S., 1
Sunshine on My Shoulders (Denver), 169, 173
Sunshine on My Shoulders lesson, 169–175
background, 170
inquiry place, 174
mystery beads bracelet activity, 171, 176
sun safety article, 172–173, 177
sun safety tips, 174, 178
Synthesizing, 12, 233–234
T-charts, 234
Text analysis, by pupils, 3
That Magnetic Dog lesson, 34, 123–129
background, 124–125
chunking activity, 127
fishing with magnets activity, 125–126, 130–132
imagine feet as magnets activity, 128
inquiry place, 129
inquiry place example, 25–27
nonfiction book features activity, 127
sketch to stretch activity, 128
warning signs for, 130
Third-grade lessons. See Grade 3 lessons
Trees. See Be a Friend to Trees lesson
Turn and talk, 14, 234
Third-grade lessons. See Grade 3 lessons
Trees. See Be a Friend to Trees lesson
Using features of nonfiction, 14–15, 127, 128
UV beads, sources, 170
Venn diagrams, 15, 234
Visualizing, 11, 234
Websites
American Heart Association, 61
about bubbles, 43
children's book authors and illustrators, 8–9
about coral reefs, 105
inventions overview, 204
for out-of-print books, 3
picture-perfect
Teachers' workshops, xv
Rachel Carson, 221
about rocks, 165
roller coaster physics, 141
sharing nature with children, 221
Sierra Club, 221
tools, history of, 204
about trees, 116
about worms [for children], 90
What Did They See (Schindel), 147, 149–150
When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer (Whitman), 179, 181–182
Wiggling Worms at Work (Pfeffer), 79, 86
Wiggling Worms lesson, ix, 31, 79–90
background, 81
damp or dry experiment, 85–86, 93
importance of worms, 89, 94–95
inquiry place, 89
My Worm Journal, 91–93
observing earthworms, 83–86, 92–93
poster session, 87–88, 96
questioning the author, 82–83
quiz, 89, 97–98
Worms
classroom care of, 81
sources for, 80
“Kids who hated science before now look forward to coming to my class for the next science lesson and lab. I’m convinced that this book will have a significant impact on our standardized test scores.” —From a review of Picture-Perfect Science Lessons on Amazon.com

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The authors know how important it is for time-starved teachers to integrate science and reading in a natural way and how students with reading troubles can use an extra nudge to get engaged in science texts. More Picture-Perfect Science Lessons is the perfect supplement to your science program—and the perfect way to help students love reading about and learning about science.

*Teachers weren’t the only ones raving! Picture-Perfect won the 2005 Distinguished Achievement Award for Teacher Resource Books from the Association of Educational Publishers.