CHILDREN’S LITERATURE

As a young child explores the places and persons in his community, he discovers the answer to “what is community?”

Where Once There Was a Wood by Denise Fleming. 1996.
Examines the many forms of wildlife that can be displaced if their environment is destroyed by development and discusses how communities and schools can provide spaces for them to live. Pheasants, red fox, raccoons, great horned owl--these and other animals are brought to life in this exquisite book by Caldecott Honor winner, Denise Fleming. Her lyrical text and rich, exuberant art combine in an ecological tribute to our disappearing wildlife.

The Empty Lot by Dale H. Fife. 1996.
A man who is about to sell an empty lot to developers discovers that the plot of land is far from empty. The sights and sounds of nature’s tenants convince the man to save the lot from the bulldozers. The man finds that the area already has plenty of tenants: a tree is an apartment house for birds; frogs and insects share the stream; children have built a tree house. The man changes his sign to: “Occupied Lot. P.S. Every square inch in use.”

When the snow flies, thousands of birds migrate south to avoid the icy tempera-tures and shortage of food. Cherry traces one wood thrush’s flight from Maryland to Costa Rica, and back again. The trip is filled with risks, both natural and manmade. Flute must battle natural foes like cats and harsh weather along both legs of his journey. Forests where he once took refuge have become suburban sprawls, and lawn chemicals taint insects Flute eats, making him ill. Cherry documents nature as it is today, without idealizing or fictionalizing the struggles of bird life.

Home is more than just the place we return to after being away. Home is something that becomes part of us as we live in it. For artists and writers, home can become part of how we see the world and how we shape our words or our artwork. For everyone, the place we call home becomes a part or our lives. This book contains poetic and narrative views of scenes from across the continent by such well-known writers as Robert Frost, John Muir, and Washington Irving as well as modern writers such as Pat Mora, Jane Yolen, and Joseph Bruchac.

Peter’s Place 1996.
An incident that's achingly familiar today is personalized in a quietly told disaster story. Peter's place is a windswept ocean beach, full of life, until an oil tanker is wrecked on the rocks, and slick blackness spills everywhere. Foreman’s watercolors capture the wide view of the seacoast and the fragility of its wildlife. Slowly Peter helps a team clean the sticky slime away and helps save a special eider duck. The healing nature of time passing is credited, and the book ends with partial restoration of a safe habitat. The story is told in a clear unemotional tone, the effect of which underlines the sorrow. No blame is placed; no moralizing is apparent, but the message is clear nonetheless.

River by Debby Atwell. 1999.
With direct language and colorful paintings, Debby Atwell relates the changes that occur through the centuries along a riverbank, from the arrival of the first humans to the coming of the first settlers, from the industrial revolution to the present day. Over time, development occurs along its banks and the river
gradually becomes depleted as more and more people use its resources to build cities, transport goods, and handle sewage. When overuse and carelessness finally take their toll, the river's natural beauty and resources are compromised. Travel downstream through time as Atwell's evocative text and narrative paintings show how the river changes.

Long before English settlers came to New England, a tribe of Algonquin Indians discovered a sparkling, clear river they called Nash-a-way. By the 20th century, waste being dumped into the river (now called Nashua) had all but killed it, until one woman and her supporters fought to to clean up the river and restore its wildlife. An ecological fable encompassing 500 years of American history.

**Letting Swift River Go** by Jane Yolen. 1995.
The historic transformation of the Swift River valley and the creation of the Quabbin Reservoir told through the eyes of Sally Jane, who learns about reconciling necessary change with the enduring value of what is lost. Yolen's poetic narration, in the voice of a woman who was six years old when her family learned they would have to give up their home, recalls the tranquility of a rural community where children fished in the river and picnicked in the graveyard. Then, "it was voted in Boston to drown our towns that the people in the city might drink." Graves are moved, trees cut, homes bulldozed, and the river dammed to cover the little towns and create a new, quite beautiful landscape. In the last scenes, the narrator and her father revisit the scene in a rowboat, pointing out underwater landmarks and finally, looking "down into the darkening deep," letting go.

Chronicles the events and changes in a young boy's life and in his environment, from babyhood to grownup, through wordless scenes observed from the window of his bedroom.

**The Land of Gray Wolf** by Thomas Locker. 1996.
A young boy, Running Deer, and his small Native American tribe, struggle to preserve their land while holding onto their traditional way of life in a turbulent modern world.

**From Dawn to Dusk** by Natalie Kinsey-Warnock. 2002.
Chopping wood in the fall, hauling sap in buckets in the spring, and weeding and hoeing in the summer--that is life on a farm in the North. It is also seven months of sloppy, impossible mud and snow season, and annoying bugs all summer-long. Why would anyone miss this place? A love of life and a love of place shine through in the rich prose, illustrated with evocative woodcuts. At the story's end, readers from cities, towns, and country will ask themselves, "What would we miss most about our home?"

As time passes, all living things change. They move, grow, and change appearance. Some changes are easy to see, and others you really have to look for. Each special place in this book, from all over the world, is shown twice: before, and then after time has passed. Readers are encouraged to look closely at the first picture, then turn to the second picture and figure out how things have changed. At the end of the book, the author describes each of the book's paintings, calling them nature timescapes. Two additional questions may be asked: 'How do humans affect the rate and types of changes to nature timescapes? 'Do human communities change, as well?'

When baby Tracy is first brought to her new home, the view of the urban neighborhood through her window is not a pleasant one. Billboards and graffiti are everywhere, garbage is strewn across the streets, and only a few meager plants are fighting their way through the cracks in the cement. Bit by bit, as Tracy grows, the area is slowly reclaimed by its residents, so that the final view through the window is clean, lush, and green, with birds nesting peacefully in new trees and vistas that reveal glimpses of a blue river. Readers can note not
just the physical changes, but also the people in the community actively engaged in affecting
those changes and producing a true home. Baker uses natural materials to create detailed
collages that tell a story in which words are superfluous.

More than six billion people inhabit the Earth. Smith compresses this impressively large
number down to a more understandable figure, 100 persons, and in nine spreads offers data
on such topics as nationalities, languages, ages, religions, and education as represented in a
condensed global village.

**JOURNALS AND MAGAZINES**

*Green Teacher* quarterly journal for educators to enhance environmental and global education across
the curriculum. Contains ideas and activities for enhancing one’s understanding and relationship with
their environment and community. [http://www.greenteacher.com](http://www.greenteacher.com)

*Great Lakes Bulletin* – publication of the Michigan Land Use Institute [www.mlui.org](http://www.mlui.org)

**CURRICULA**

*Architecture in Education: A Resource of Imaginative Ideas and Tested Activities* by March

*Creative Teaching With Historic Places* published by the National Park Service in Cultural Resource
Management. Volume 23, No. 8, 2000. This issue can be accessed electronically through the Cultural
Resource Management homepage at [http://www.cr.nps.gov/crm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/crm) Contains collection of articles that
includes tips on interpretive planning, showcases examples of ways to tell the stories of places using
case studies that describe effective public education initiatives at a variety of sites.

*Greening of School Grounds: Creating Habitats for Learning* edited by Tim Grant and Gail
Littlejohn. 2001. To order, call 1-416-960-1244 or www.greenteacher.com

*Keeping a Nature Journal* by Clare Walker Leslie and Charles E. Roth. This book describes nature
journaling—the regular recording of observations, perceptions, and feelings about the natural world
around you, and how to do it. Nature journaling provides a vehicle for building one’s sense of place, for
identifying and recording what is of personal interest and importance in one’s community and
surroundings. Nature journaling stimulates more careful observations, through drawings and short
descriptions, and records one’s responses to, and reflections about, both the built and natural worlds.

*A Sense of Place: Teaching Children About the Environment With Picture Books* by Daniel A.

*This Land Is Your Land* by MSU Extension's United Growth for Kent County project (2002).
[www.msue.msu.edu/kent/yourland](http://www.msue.msu.edu/kent/yourland) A free, activity-based youth curriculum on land use issues from the
internet. The curriculum was designed to enable young people to contribute solutions to current land
use issues, as well as, participate in making sound decisions now and in the future.

*Viewfinders (Gr.2-6)* 1996. The Dunn Foundation, Warwick, Rhode Island [www.dunnfoundation.org](http://www.dunnfoundation.org)
The eight activities in ViewFinders increase awareness of the visual environment through a hands-on
approach to learning. The activities can be used either as a complete unit or as supplementary lessons.
Teacher background materials, extension activities, a guide to additional resources and a student
reading list are included.
**Viewfinders Too: Exploring Community Appearance** (Gr. 6-8) 2002. The Dunn Foundation, Warwick, Rhode Island (www.dunnfoundation.org) Provides lessons for students to explore their visual landscape and become active stewards of their community’s visual environment. Students are challenged to look at their communities critically and creatively develop their vision of the future.


**VIDEOS**

**Back to the Future—Designs for Walkable Neighborhoods.** Citizens for a Better Environment. 152 W. Wisconsin Ave., Suite 510, Milwaukee, WI 53203. Tel: (414) 271-7280 (19 minutes). Illustrates what it’s like trying to walk through a community where sprawl has taken place. Provides suggestions for how to design for diverse land uses while still maintaining a sense of community.

**Community of Choices.** 2002. Edward T. McMahon, The Conservation Fund, 1800 North Kent Street, Suite 1120 Arlington, VA 22209 (30 minutes) Tel: 703-525-6300 www.conservationfund.org Illustrates how planning is the key to protecting and enhancing the natural, cultural, and historic characteristics of a community. Failing to plan, is planning to fail. However, protecting and enhancing communities’ unique characteristics will make them more attractive and promote commerce.

**Looking at Change Before It Occurs.** Produced by Maguire & Reeder. Available from Design Access, 401 F St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20001. (17:20 minutes) Illustrates how planners can work with communities to develop visual displays of the consequences of choosing or not choosing various planning options.

**Reference Books**

Alvord, Katie. 2000. *Divorce Your Car: Ending the Love Affair with the Automobile.* Traces the history of America’s dependency on the automobile and its impacts. Examines substitutes for driving, such as walking, bicycling, carpooling, public transit, and alternative fuels.

Howe, Jim, Ed McMahon and Luther Propst. 1997. *Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities.* Island Press, Washington D.C. Emphasizes why and how to manage change in places where people really want to visit or live, while preserving community character and healthy natural systems, and promoting a vibrant local economy.


Other student-friendly articles by same author:

- **All Development is Not Created Equal** [http://www.plannersweb.com/articles/look32.html](http://www.plannersweb.com/articles/look32.html)
- **Have It Your Way: Fast Food Restaurant Design** [http://www.plannersweb.com/wfiles/w286.html](http://www.plannersweb.com/wfiles/w286.html)

Roberts, Elizabeth and Elias Amidon, Editors. 1991. *Earth Prayers* In forest clearings, beneath star-filled skies, in cathedrals, and before the hearth... women and men have always given voice to the impulse to celebrate the world that surrounds and sustains them. From Walt Whitman, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Black Elk, to Margaret Atwood, the varied voices offer songs and prayers for land, sea, and air; graces for food; invocations, and poems.
Websites

America's Most Livable Communities http://www.mostlivable.org/
American Planning Association www.planning.org
Center for Livable Communities www.lgc.org
Community Transformations: http://www.sierraclub.org/sprawl/community/transformations/index.asp
http://www.jointventure.org/resources/photosims/sim_index.html

The Dunn Foundation www.dunnfoundation.org
Environmental Protection Agency http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/
Find Your Spot www.findyourspot.com (Online quiz to find the best places to live for you!) Growing Smart in Minnesota http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/ (search “Growing Smart in Minnesota”)
Measuring Sprawl and Its Impact http://www.smartgrowthamerica.com/
Michigan Land Use Institute www.mlu.org

Michigan Society of Planning www.planningmi.org
Minnesota Smart Growth Network http://www.1000fom.org/smart_growth_network.htm
National Trust for Historic Preservation http://www.nationaltrust.org/
National MainStreet Program www.mainst.org
Partners for Livable Communities www.livable.com
Planners Web http://www.plannersweb.com/
Scenic America www.scenic.org
Stealth Network Technologies http://www.stealthsite.com/ (Designs cell tower concealment sites)
Smart Growth Network www.smartgrowth.org
Terra Server (aerial photos) http://terraserver.homeadvisor.msn.com/default.asp
1000 Friends of Wisconsin http://www.1kfriends.org/
Urban Land Institute www.uli.org
Wisconsin Land Council http://www.doa.state.wi.us/search.asp (search “Wisconsin Land Council”)