

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Hello, Earth!

Poems to Our Planet

Written by **Joyce Sidman** Illustrated by **Miren Asiain Lora**

A gorgeous, expansive celebration of science and art, Hello, Earth! is a book to cherish in whatever landscape you call home.

We walk on Earth's surface every day, but how often do we wonder about the incredible planet around us? From the molten cracks below to the shimmering moon above, *Hello, Earth!* explores the wonders of the natural world. This playful journey across our puzzle-piece continents does not hesitate to ask questions—even of the Earth itself!

Joyce Sidman's imaginative poems encourage boundless curiosity, and Miren Asiain Lora's stunning paintings capture the beauty of Earth's ecosystems, creatures, and powerhouse plants. The book concludes with extensive scientific material to foster further learning about how the earth works, from water cycles to plate tectonics to the origin of ocean tides.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JOYCE SIDMAN is the author of *The Girl who Drew Butterflies* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), which received the Sibert Medal, as well as *Dark Emperor and Other Poems of the Night* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), a Newbery Honor Book. Her other books include *Swirl by Swirl*, *Winter Bees*, and *Before Morning* (all Houghton Mifflin Harcourt). For her acclaimed body of work, she has received the NCTE Award for Excellence in Poetry for Children. When not writing, Joyce enjoys exploring the woods near her home in Wayzata, Minnesota. Visit Joyce's website at joycesidman.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

MIREN ASIAIN LORA is the illustrator of *A Good Day* (Eerdmans). She grew up in Spain, where she studied fine arts at the University of the Basque Country. Her artwork has been shown in several exhibitions in multiple countries. In her illustrations, Miren works to convey the magic of everyday life. Visit Miren's website at miaslo.com.

Hardcover ▪ \$18.99
8½" x 12" ▪ 68 pages ▪ Ages 5–9
ISBN: 978-0-8028-5528-2

TO ORDER

Telephone (toll free): 800-253-7521
Telephone (local): 616-459-4591
Fax: 616-459-6540
Email: sales@eerdmans.com

Visit our websites:
www.eerdmans.com/youngreaders
www.eerdlings.com

If you have any suggestions for using *Hello, Earth!* with young readers, we would be happy to hear from you.

Eerdmans Books for Young Readers
4035 Park East Court SE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546



EERDMANS BOOKS
for Young Readers
Grand Rapids, Michigan

An imprint of Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.



DISCUSSION GUIDE

THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

- Poetry
- Figurative Language
- Earth Science
- Biology
- Conservation & Sustainability
- Meteorology & Weather
- Photosynthesis & Plants

VOCABULARY USE AND ACQUISITION

Find these words in the book: *fantastical, slither, jut, bristle, skittering, blasted, surge, billow, ebb, sift, and wondrous*. Can you find any context clues to their meaning? Do they look like words you've seen before? Then look them up in a dictionary and/or a thesaurus. What other words could Joyce Sidman have chosen instead? Why do you think she chose each particular word?

Find these scientific terms in the poems: *constellation, continent, equator, erupt, gravity, lava, and tropics*. From context, what do you think they mean? Have you heard any of these words before? Then look up the words in a dictionary, science book, or encyclopedia. Then read the poem again. Do you notice anything you didn't before?

This book uses many strong, vivid verbs like *wrinkle, trample, smooch, slither, and bristle*. Can you find these verbs in context? What other intriguing verbs can you find in the book? What do they add to your experience? Then create your own sentence, paragraph, or poem using a few of these verbs.

Onomatopoeia are words that imitate or suggest the sound they describe—like *buzz, hiss, or boo*. Can you find any examples of onomatopoeic words in this book? Create a list of what you find. What effect do these words have in their poems?

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Follow the ideas of “big” and “small” through the poems, starting with “Big and Small.” What makes the speaker feel big? Small? When do our actions as humans seem small, and when does they feel big?

Name several examples from *Hello, Earth!* that show how people and the earth “fit together” (“Big and Small”). How do we rely on our home’s processes for survival? Does *Hello, Earth!* describe any times when people’s desires and the earth’s needs conflict?

What is the “mighty wind” mentioned in “Questions and Answers”? Why might it scare the speaker “a little/(okay, a lot!)”?

Joyce Sidman describes plants as Earth’s “quiet powerhouses.” What do plants do (mentioned in “Jungles”) that would earn them that name?

After reading “Rainbow,” look at all the different people in the illustration. Can you guess where they’re from? How old do you think they are? What interests do they have? Then re-read the poem. Despite all their differences, what needs, desires, and hopes do these people share?





DISCUSSION GUIDE

CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

Hello, Earth! is written in mostly non-rhyming free verse. Why do you think Joyce Sidman chose this form? Though the poems generally don't rhyme, what elements help you recognize these words as poems? How does poetic language differ from regular prose?

Write the five senses—smell, touch, taste, sight, and hearing—across the top of a piece of paper. Then, while a teacher or classmate reads poems from *Hello, Earth!* aloud, write words you hear that appeal to each sense. When you're done reading, compare your notes to your classmates. Did they catch anything you missed? Do some words fit in multiple categories?

Hello, Earth! uses **apostrophe**, a poetic device that allows the poet to speak to an inanimate or abstract subject—in this case, the earth. What effect does this have on readers? How would the poems be different without it?

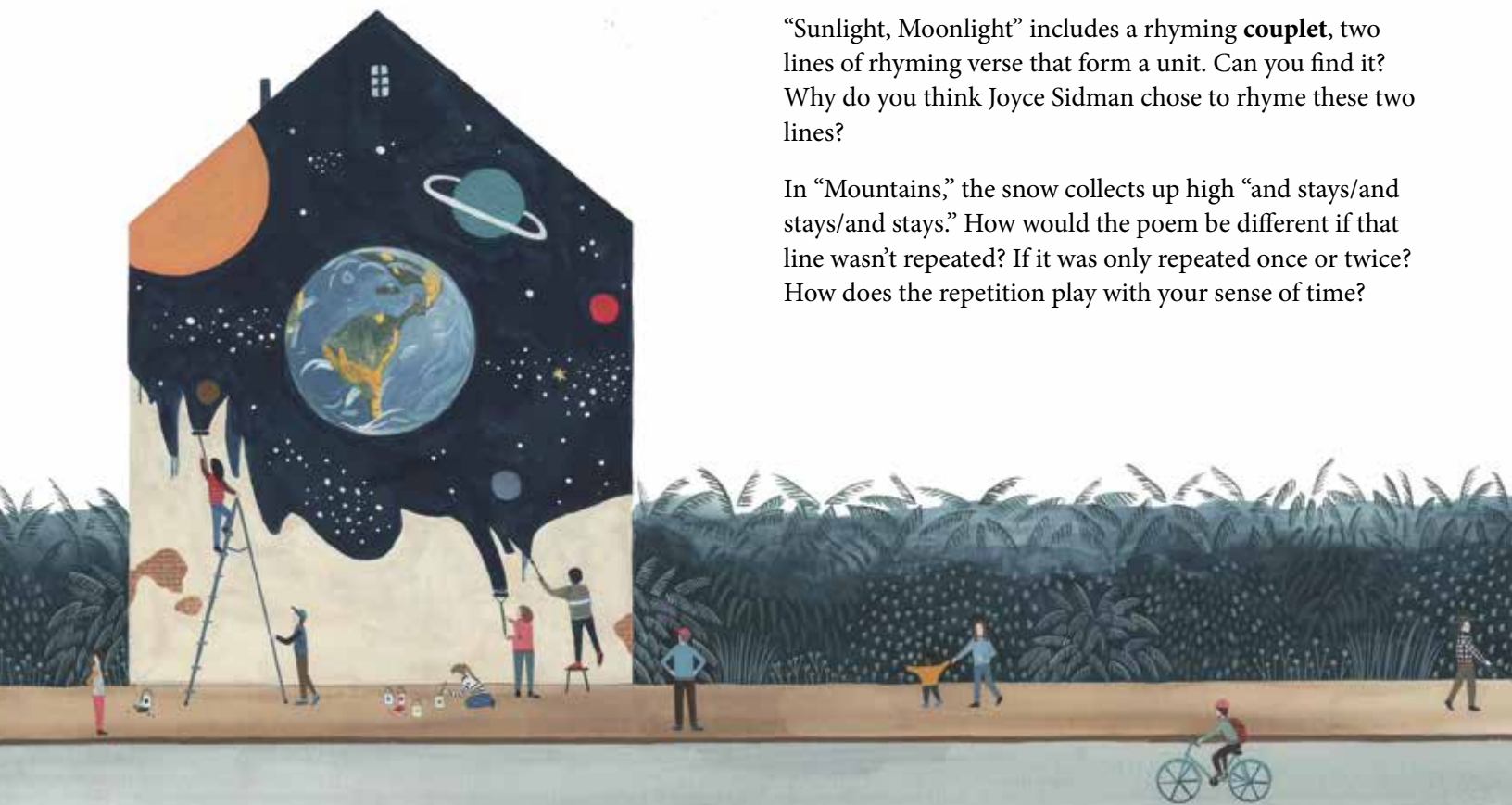
Similes describe something by comparing two things using like or as. “Fiery” asks how it feels to “have parts of you/erupt like a new tooth”, and “Mountains” says “the air/ is crisp as ice.” Can you find any other similes in the book? What effects do they have? Try writing a few similes of your own about the natural world.

Metaphors describe something without using *like* or *as*, often by saying one thing is a different thing. Is Earth literally “becom[ing] a new puzzle” every day (“Continents”)? Is the moon literally Earth’s “silver sister” (“Sunlight, Moonlight”)? Can you find any other metaphors in the book? What effects do they have? Try writing a few metaphors of your own about the natural world.

What does “Floating” describe as Earth’s “brothers and sisters”? Why do you think Joyce Sidman chose to describe them that way? Can you find any other examples of **personification** (giving human traits to non-human objects or creatures) in this book?

“Sunlight, Moonlight” includes a rhyming **couplet**, two lines of rhyming verse that form a unit. Can you find it? Why do you think Joyce Sidman chose to rhyme these two lines?

In “Mountains,” the snow collects up high “and stays/and stays/and stays.” How would the poem be different if that line wasn't repeated? If it was only repeated once or twice? How does the repetition play with your sense of time?





DISCUSSION GUIDE

INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS

How does *Hello, Earth!* argue that we should stop and listen and pay attention to our planet? How is this method different than a persuasive essay?

Read one of Joyce Sidman's other poetry books about nature, such as *Swirl by Swirl* (Houghton Mifflin, 2012), *Dark Emperor and Other Poems of the Night* (Houghton Mifflin, 2010), or *Song of the Water Boatman and Other Pond Poems* (Houghton Mifflin, 2005). How is each book similar to *Hello, Earth!* and its focus? How is each book different—in its art, its poems, or other elements?

Look at Miren Asiain Lora's other illustrations, including in *A Good Day* (Eerdmans, 2019) and on her website (miaslo.com). How are they similar to and different from her work in this book? Think about colors, perspective, and what characters she includes.

Read "Floating," then watch a video of Earth seen from space, such as "Earth Views: Earth from Space Seen from the ISS" on YouTube. Can you find a view of your continent or home region? What surprises you about how cities, plants, oceans, mountains, and clouds look from above? Then re-read "Floating." What other questions do you have?

After reading "Long Memory," look up a timeline of Earth's natural history, from the earliest beginnings to the present day. What era would you like to visit? What extinct plant or animal would you like to meet?

"Water Planet" describes the ocean's animals as "[c]reatures whose bodies/breathe water/instead of air." Investigate how fish, dolphins, whales, jellyfish, and other animals do this. How is this different from how we breathe? Connect this to what you've learned from "Jungles" and "Powerhouse Plants."

What "giant" do the illustrations show alongside "Giants"? What other "giants" might make our hearts feel "large/and light"? Think about plants, animals, landscapes, and other features of the natural world.

Look at the details of "Our Part" for the "quiet, daily things" the poem mentions. What is on the hill, in front of the people? What symbol is on the green and blue bins? What might the people on the ladder be doing? Why might the people be biking rather than driving? Can you think of any other "quiet, daily" ways we can care for our planet?

CREATING AND WRITING

At the beginning of a science unit or lesson, write your own questioning "poem to our planet" modeled after *Hello, Earth!* What do you wonder about? What do you want to explore? At the end of the unit or lesson, write a new "poem to our planet." After learning more, does Earth feel large or small, old or young, predictable or surprising? What new questions do you have? Include specific scientific details.

Read the "More about How the Earth Works" section at the end of the book. Then select one of the topics (such as Earth's size, plate tectonics, or currents) for further research. Meet with a teacher or librarian to narrow your topic and find trustworthy materials. Create a short, two-

minute presentation on this topic for the class, opening each topic by reading the related poem from *Hello, Earth!*

Hello, Earth! reminds us how wonderful our home planet is. Why do you think we forget to stop and think about this? Re-read "Noisy" to help you answer, then write a short paragraph or poem about how Earth amazes you. How might remembering Earth's wonders change how you think or act in the future?

For a list of further resources, please refer to "For Further Reading" in the back matter of *Hello, Earth! Poems to Our Planet*.