

# Eco-stories for Kids

**Environmental Literacy:** <http://www.enviroliteracy.org/>

What is Environmental Literacy?

□ Maryland definition:

*students that possess the **knowledge, intellectual skills, attitudes, experiences and motivation** to make and act upon responsible environmental decisions as individuals and as members of their community.* Environmentally literate students understand environmental and physical processes and systems, including human systems. They are able to analyze global, social, cultural, political, physical, economic and environmental relationships, and weigh various sides of environmental issues to make responsible decisions as individuals and as members of their community and citizens of the world.

[http://www.orionmagazine.org/index.php/audio-video/item/richard\\_louv\\_and\\_friends\\_on\\_reimagining\\_nature\\_literacy/](http://www.orionmagazine.org/index.php/audio-video/item/richard_louv_and_friends_on_reimagining_nature_literacy/) Lots of good info here. And an audio interview with R. Louv.

[http://www.childrenandnature.org/news/detail/reconnecting\\_kids\\_to\\_nature\\_the\\_benefits\\_of\\_school\\_gardens/](http://www.childrenandnature.org/news/detail/reconnecting_kids_to_nature_the_benefits_of_school_gardens/)

Article on the value of outdoor classrooms in the schools.

## TREES

### *Why the Evergreen Never Loses It's Leaves*

Winter was coming, and the birds had flown far to the south, where the air was warm and they could find berries to eat. One little bird had broken its wing and could not fly with the others. It was alone in the cold world of frost and snow. The forest looked warm, and it made its way to the trees as well as it could, to ask for help.

First it came to a birch tree. "Beautiful birch tree," it said, "my wing is broken, and my friends have flown away. May I live among your branches till they come back to me?"

"No, indeed," answered the birch tree, drawing her fair green leaves away. "We of the great forest have our own birds to help. I can do nothing for you."

"The birch is not very strong," said the little bird to itself, "and it might be that she could not hold me easily. I will ask the oak." So the bird said, "Great oak tree, you are so strong, will you not let me live on your boughs till my friends come back in the springtime?"

"In the springtime!" cried the oak. "That is a long way off. How do I know what you might do in all that time? Birds are always looking for something to eat, and you might even eat up some of my acorns."

"It may be that the willow will be kind to me," thought the bird, and it said, "Gentle willow, my wing is broken, and I could not fly to the south with the other birds. May I live on your branches till the springtime?"

The willow did not look gentle then, for she drew herself up proudly and said, "Indeed, I do not know you, and we willows never talk to people whom we do not know. Very likely there are trees somewhere that will take in strange birds. Leave me at once."

The poor little bird did not know what to do. Its wing was not yet strong, but it began to fly away as well as it could. Before it had gone far a voice was heard. "Little bird," it said, "where are you going?"

"Indeed, I do not know," answered the bird sadly. "I am very cold."

"Come right here, then," said the friendly spruce tree, for it was her voice that had called.

"You shall live on my warmest branch all winter if you choose."

"Will you really let me?" asked the little bird eagerly.

"Indeed, I will," answered the kind-hearted spruce tree. "If your friends have flown away, it is time for the trees to help you. Here is the branch where my leaves are thickest and softest."

"My branches are not very thick," said the friendly pine tree, "but I am big and strong, and I can keep the North Wind from you and the spruce."

"I can help, too," said a little juniper tree. "I can give you berries all winter long, and every bird knows that juniper berries are good."

So the spruce gave the lonely little bird a home; the pine kept the cold North Wind away from it; and the juniper gave it berries to eat. The other trees looked on and talked together wisely.

"I would not have strange birds on my boughs," said the birch.

"I shall not give my acorns away for any one," said the oak.

"I never have anything to do with strangers," said the willow, and the three trees drew their leaves closely about them.

In the morning all those shining, green leaves lay on the ground, for a cold North Wind had come in the night, and every leaf that it touched fell from the tree.

"May I touch every leaf in the forest?" asked the wind in its frolic.

"No," said the Frost King. "The trees that have been kind to the little bird with the broken wing may keep their leaves."

This is why the leaves of the spruce, the pine, and the juniper are always green.

**See also:**

<http://www.apples4theteacher.com/holidays/arborday/kids-short-stories/> Printable short stories for kids. You might have THEM learn one.

[http://www.spiritoftrees.org/folktales/sort\\_tree/folktales\\_trees.html](http://www.spiritoftrees.org/folktales/sort_tree/folktales_trees.html) Categorized by type of tree/country origin of story

## **SPIDERS**

<http://www.kinderkorner.com/spiders.html> There IS A Spider on the Floor (song) and others

<http://www.spiderzrule.com/legends.htm> (and other stuff, too)

## **The Water Drop**

by Friedrich Wilhelm Carove

There was once a child who lived in a little hut, and in the hut there was nothing but a little bed and a looking glass - but as soon as the first sunbeam glided softly through the casement and kissed his sweet eyelids, and the finch and the linnnet waked him merrily with their morning songs, he arose and went out into the green meadow.

And he begged flour of the primrose, and sugar of the violet, and butter of the buttercup. He shook dewdrops from the cowslip into the cup of the harebell, spread out a large lime leaf, set his breakfast upon it, and feasted daintily. And he invited a humming bee and a gay butterfly to partake of his feast, but his favorite guest was a blue dragonfly.

The bee murmured a good deal about his riches, and the butterfly told his adventures. Such talk delighted the child, and his breakfast was the sweeter to him, and the sunshine on leaf and flower seemed more bright and cheering.

But when the bee had flown off to beg from flower to flower, and the butterfly had fluttered away to his play fellows, the dragonfly still remained, poised on a blade of grass. Her slender and burnished body, more brightly and deeply blue than the deep blue sky, glistened in the sunbeam. Her net like wings laughed at the flowers because they could not fly, but must stand still and abide the wind and rain.

The dragonfly sipped a little of the child's clear dewdrops and blue violet honey, and then whispered her winged words. Such stories as the dragonfly did tell! And as the child sat motionless with his blue eyes shut, and his head rested on his hands, she thought he had fallen asleep - so she poised her double wings and flew into the rustling wood.

But the child had only sunk into a dream of delight and was wishing he were a sunbeam or a moonbeam - and he would have been glad to hear more and more, and forever.

But at last as all was still, he opened his eyes and looked around for his dear guest, but she was flown far away. He could not bear to sit there any longer alone, and he rose and went to the gurgling brook. It gushed and rolled so merrily, and tumbled so wildly along as it hurried to throw itself head-over-heels into the river, just as if the great massy rock out of which it sprang were close behind it, and could only be escaped by a breakneck leap.

Then the child began to talk to the little waves and asked them whence they came. They would not stay to give him an answer, but danced away one over another - till at last, that the sweet child might not be grieved, a water-drop stopped behind a piece of rock.

"A long time ago," said the water-drop, "I lived with my countless sisters in the great Ocean, in peace and unity. We had all sorts of pastimes. Sometimes we mounted up high into the air, and peeped at the stars. Then we sank plump down deep below, and looked how the coral builders work till they are tired, that they may reach the light of day at last.

"But I was conceited, and thought myself much better than my sisters. And so, one day, when the sun rose out of the sea, I clung fast to one of his hot beams and thought how I should reach the stars and become one of them.

"But I had not ascended far when the sunbeam shook me off, and, in spite of all I could say or do, let me fall into a dark cloud. And soon a flash of fire darted through the cloud, and now I thought I must surely die - but the cloud laid itself down softly upon the top of a mountain, and so I escaped.

"Now I thought I should remain hidden, when, all on a sudden, I slipped over a round pebble, fell from one stone to another, down into the depths of the mountain. At last it was pitch dark and I could neither see nor hear anything.

"Then I found, indeed, that 'pride goeth before a fall,' for, though I had already laid aside all my unhappy pride in the cloud, my punishment was to remain for some time in the heart of the mountain. After undergoing many purifications from the hidden virtues of metals and minerals, I was at length permitted to come up once more into the free and cheerful air, and to gush from this rock and journey with this happy stream. Now will I run back to my sisters in the Ocean, and there wait patiently till I am called to something better."

So said the water-drop to the child, but scarcely had she finished her story, when the root of a For-Get-Me-Not caught the drop and sucked her in, that she might become a floweret, and twinkle brightly as a blue star on the green firmament of earth.

## **PREDATOR/PREY STORIES**

### **Three Little Pigs and lots of others**

<http://www.uga.edu/srel/kidsdoscience/kidsdoscience-predator-game.htm> (game that could adapt to nonfiction books)

## **DRAGONFLY**

<http://naturenest.wordpress.com/2009/06/11/summer-dragonfly-craft-story/>

## Eliza and the Dragonfly (Ira Children's Book Awards. Primary) [Hardcover]

[Susie Caldwell Rinehart](#)

(Author), [Anisa Claire Hovemann](#) (Illustrator)

### BEES

[http://www.insectvista.com/Myths, Legends and Folklore About the Bee.html](http://www.insectvista.com/Myths,LegendsandFolkloreAbouttheBee.html)

a good site for lore on a variety of insects

### SUN

[http://library.thinkquest.org/15215/History/sun\\_folklore.htm](http://library.thinkquest.org/15215/History/sun_folklore.htm) (interactive-good computer lab extension)

<http://solar-center.stanford.edu/folklore/> (representing the world view of many cultures)

### SUNFLOWERS

#### Legend has it....

- that a sunflower planted in your yard will bring you good luck.
- that a sunflower cut at sunset will bring you good luck the next day.
- that if you want know the truth in any situation, sleep with a sunflower under your bed.
- to protect against small pox, wear sunflower seeds around your neck.

#### Sunflower History

Sunflower remains were found in North America as early as 3,000 B.C. American Indians grew sunflowers and had many uses for them. The first use was of course for food. They ate the seeds which are high in calcium, protein and other nutrients. They enjoyed them as snacks but also ground them and made bread from them.

Other uses included extracting the yellow dye from the flower petal and to extract the sunflower oil for ceremonial body painting.

The fibrous stalks were used to add fiber to their diets. They also were used as strong building materials for houses and huts.

The yellow blooming sunflowers were very important as their blooming schedule indicated the hunting calendar. They also were used in ritualistic ceremonies.

VISIT <http://www.zimbio.com/Zazzle+Galleries/articles/hbmhkslvTU1/Sunflower+Facts+and+Folklore> for some neat sunflower "card" templates

## **DANDELION**

[http://www.naturewatch.ca/english/plantwatch/dandelion/activities\\_books.html](http://www.naturewatch.ca/english/plantwatch/dandelion/activities_books.html)

<http://www.mofga.org/Default.aspx?tabid=756>