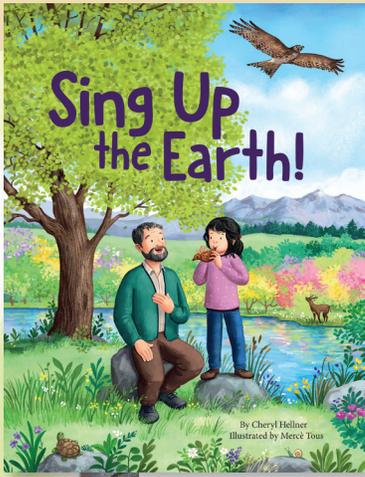


# Welcome to the Explorers' Guide for *Sing Up the Earth!*



## A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Dear Story-Companions: Parents, Grandparents, Teachers, Librarians, Nature Guides, Mentors, and Friends,

I believe in stories. I believe in the power of stories to evoke a world—this world, our world—that is both miraculous and real; beautiful, difficult, sometimes heartbreaking, immense with love.

I believe in stories. I believe in their power to heal, nourish, inspire, and strengthen us.

*Sing Up the Earth!* celebrates:

- ✧ Human creativity, our common heritage across nationalities, borders, and ages
- ✧ Wild creatures, and the wild music—songs, sounds, calls—of Earth
- ✧ Gifts of caring, shared experiences, and wisdom between generations

This Explorers' Guide presents engaging invitations to children of various ages and stages that can widen and deepen their experience of the story. This guide is also for you, an invitation to your own creativity as you read, reflect, and share this narrative.

I believe in stories. Stories are alive. They speak to us in many different, often mysterious, ways.

What moments or images in the story draw you in most deeply?

Sing and stay curious. Nourish a sense of wonder.

Yours,

[cherylhellner.com](http://cherylhellner.com)



EXPLORING AND LEARNING ABOUT ANIMALS  
ANIMAL WONDERMENT  
(Nature/Science study)

Storyline: *When Grandpa played That Hawk  
the wild animals would come—  
closer, curious—  
singing back their own wild songs.*

**NOTE TO STORY-COMPANIONS**

Begin this activity by showing pictures of various animals that live within 100 miles of your location.

*Invitation to Explorers*

*I*f you could slip out of your everyday life—for just an hour, or maybe for a day—and become a wild creature:

a hawk or a hummingbird

a turtle, a toad, or a salamander

a fox, a coyote, a bear, or a deer

a firefly, a honey bee, a dragonfly, a butterfly

or some other wild creature who lives near you

What would you choose to become and why?

What do you already know about the curious and amazing ways this animal lives?

What special qualities or strengths do they have?

What do you like most about them?



*Now let's explore a little deeper.* Be a detective. Using books, nature videos, local nature centers and parks, see how much you can discover about your animal:

Where does your animal live? This is called the animal's *habitat*. In the forest or in open fields, near ponds, a river, or the ocean? In the mountains? In a desert place?

What does your animal need to eat and to grow?

How does your animal's life begin, and how does its' body change as it grows?

Does your animal make sounds, cries, or songs?

What threats or dangers does your animal face?

## MAKING A POSTER

### **My favorite wild creature**

Find some photographs you can cut out and use of the animal you have been learning about. Make a poster with these photos and your own words about what you have discovered about the way this animal lives. Include any threats or dangers for this animal.

## CREATING A COUNCIL OF ALL CREATURES

A theatrical group activity for older children  
(Cultivating empathy for animals, creative imagination, art, and theatre)

### NOTE TO STORY-COMPANIONS

For this theatrical activity, simple decorative masks can be made using white paper plates or poster board, construction paper, glue sticks, tape, scissors, markers, etc. The masks can be attached to a dowel, tongue depressor, or short stick so children can hold their mask in front of their face.

Each child chooses one animal they have studied to introduce to the group. In addition to creating a mask, children may want to practice moving the way this animal moves and making sounds this animal might make.

When it's time to call all the animals together, you may want to use a particular song, or a musical instrument—such as a drum, recorder, or ocarina—to signal it is time for the animals to gather.

## Invitation to Explorers

Imagine you have discovered a secret gathering place for the animals. Maybe in the deep forest around a campfire, or on a beach at night under a wide bright sky of stars.

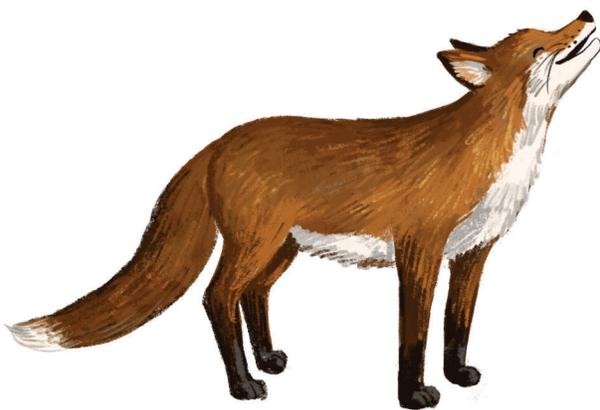
Imagine you can hear the animals as they introduce themselves, one at a time, around the circle: Red Fox and Turtle, Deer and Bear, Firefly and Hummingbird.

They are speaking about their lives: where their homes are, what they eat, what they like to do, what is hard for them, the dangers they face, and what they wish people knew and understood about them.

Now imagine you can become one of the wild animals in this secret council. Who would you want to become?

Make a mask of this animal and remember what you like most about them and all you have learned about what they need to live. Now you are ready to join the Council of All Creatures.

This Council of All Creatures is an adaptation for children of Joanna Macy's beautiful and powerful meditation for adults called Council of All Beings (*Coming Back to Life* by Joanna Macy and Molly Brown, 2014, New Society Publishers).



## LISTENING TO THE WILD MUSIC OF EARTH

(Nature awareness, listening skills)

*Storyline: Red Fox came yipping and yowling  
Coyote came with his howling song.  
Raven, Owl, Deer and Bobcat,  
Bullfrogs, Spring Peepers, Toads.  
So many animals. So many different Earth-songs.*

### NOTE TO STORY-COMPANIONS

Imagine Earth without the songs of birds, the chirping song of crickets, the buzzing song of bees. Imagine Earth without the sounds and calls of Squirrel, Chipmunk, Fox, Coyote, Frog, and Toad.

Imagine our Earth before there was any wild nature music at all, except for the very oldest sounds:

Waves breaking on a beach. Water racing in a river.

Wind swirling. The fierce call of thunder.

Even in the city, we can invite our children to stop, close their eyes, and listen to the wind music outside our window or the sound that thunder makes as a storm comes closer; as a storm moves farther away.





# *Invitations to Explorers*

## **Creating and Collecting Nature Sound Cards**

What's the loudest nature sound you've ever heard?

What's the softest?

What's the scariest nature sound you've ever heard?

What's the most exciting?

What's the most beautiful?

How many kinds of nature sounds, the wild songs of Earth, have you heard?

Examples:

Bird songs—Hawk, Owl, Geese, Robin, Mockingbird

Insect songs—Crickets, Bees, Cicada, Katydid

Frog and Toad songs

Mammal songs—Coyote and Fox, Moose and Deer, Squirrel and Chipmunk, Bobcat and Woodchuck

Make a 3x5 index card for each nature sound you have heard and the place, or places, where you heard it. Decorate your nature sound cards with pictures of animals you draw or that you find and paste on your cards.

See how many different Nature Sound Cards you can create and collect.

### **NOTE TO STORY-COMPANIONS**

Take a field trip to a local natural area. This could be a park, a trail along a river or creek, or a path through a forest at a nature center. Bring along 4x6 index cards (or nature journals) and pencils.

As soon as you arrive, stop for a couple of minutes, and ask everyone to close their eyes and listen. What are the first sounds that greet us here?

There may be traffic sounds, airplanes flying over, people talking or laughing. Are there any other sounds, sounds not made by people? What do you hear as you listen? Now it is time to begin a nature wander and explore the wild music of this place.

## EARTH'S WILD MUSIC WANDER GAME

Wander along a path or trail to an interesting place that offers a variety of natural sounds. Invite children to each find a place to stand or sit where they can close their eyes and listen to nature (three to five minutes of listening depending on age).

Now give each child an index card and a pencil. Ask them to write down, in their own words, the nature sounds they heard.

For example: *Flowing creek water; Frogs croaking; Wind shaking the trees; A bird like a flute; Chipmunks chattering.*

If there is time and interest, repeat the game in a different location.

Here is a fascinating listening trick you can try. Writer and naturalist Joseph Cornell tells how we can use our hands to help us hear. Try cupping your hands behind your ears. This makes your ears bigger and more sensitive like the ears of a Rabbit or a Fox. To hear sounds behind you, cup your hands in front of your ears.





## EXPLORING THE AMAZING WORLD OF CLAY

(fine motor skills, art)

Storylines: *Grandpa says clay is amazing.*

*It comes from the body of our Earth . . .*

*All summer long, my hands in the wet clay.*

### NOTE TO STORY-COMPANIONS

Clay is amazing! It comes right from the Earth and can be shaped into many different creations.

Young children, age 3-6, especially enjoy exploring and making things with clay. For beginners, use a natural earth clay such as Crayola Air-Dry Clay. If you use the plain white Crayola Clay it can then be painted with tempera paint (or Natural Earth Paint—see below). You won't need an oven or kiln. Drying time is 2-3 days depending on the thickness of the clay creations.

Here are three simple invitations for exploring the amazing world of clay. The materials you will need are suggested with each invitation.

### *Invitations to Explorers*

#### **Nature Circles**

To make a Nature Circle, take a handful of clay in your hands and roll it into a ball. Now flatten the clay by pressing down on it against a board or table top. Spread it out with your fingers until you have a circle the size you want. (You can also use a wooden block or small rolling pin.)

Try pressing a few small leaves, flowers, small stones, or tiny shells into the clay. Once the clay dries in a few days you will have a beautiful Nature Circle to keep or give as a gift.

You can also make leaf or fern prints for your Nature Circle. Just press an interesting fresh leaf down in the center of a clay circle and then gently pull the leaf up by the stem. This will create a stamp or print of the leaf in the center of your Nature Circle.

## Clay Critters

Now see if you can make an animal with clay. It may be a wild animal you know such as a Rabbit or Squirrel, a Turtle or Snake, a Caterpillar or Butterfly, or a make-believe animal that you create from your imagination.

Again, start with a handful of clay that you roll into a ball. Press and shape your ball of clay into the main body of your animal. Try putting a little water on your fingertips to help pull and shape the clay into a head, legs, or wings.

Remember you can always start over! Just shape the clay back into a ball and begin again.

Once the clay dries, you might also like to paint your clay critter with tempera paint or Natural Earth Paint.

## Making Pictures and Designs with Natural Earth Paint

Long, long ago people ground up earthen clays and minerals to make the paint they used for their pictures and designs. Natural Earth Paint is made the same way. These vibrant paints can be used on paper, fabric, wood, rocks, and more. Learn more at their website: [NaturalEarthPaint.com](http://NaturalEarthPaint.com)





## TELL ME A STORY

(language skills, creative imagination, exploring our feelings about loss)

Storyline: *When it was safe to go inside the barn,  
we raked through ashes . . .  
But not one red-brown shiny piece  
of That Hawk my grandpa loved.*

### NOTE TO STORY-COMPANIONS

There is a powerful and beautiful connection between creativity and healing. Offering children an opportunity to create something in response to an experience of loss can open a door into a deeper understanding and acceptance of what is hidden in the heart. Children who cannot write their own story can still be gently encouraged to tell you a story, which you write down for them.

## *Invitation to Explorers*

### Creating My Story

A young girl, Meadow, is the storyteller of *Sing Up the Earth!* It's told in her voice, in her words.

Now it's your turn to create your own story.

In *Sing Up the Earth*, Meadow's grandpa loses his favorite clay instrument given to him when he was a boy.

Have you ever lost something that was very special to you? Something you loved? How did that happen? How did you feel? Did you ever find that special thing you lost?

Try telling, or writing, a story about what you lost. If you like, you may want to add pictures to go along with the words of your story.

For older children:

**“When I lost you, I felt”—Creating a poem using comparisons from nature**

Try writing a poem in which you speak to that special thing, animal, or person you loved that you have lost. You may have lost your old home and the neighborhood you loved. You may have lost something that was very special to you, like Grandpa’s ocarina *That Hawk*. A pet you loved may have gotten sick or hurt and died. Your very best friend may have moved to a new school and you don’t get to see each other much anymore.

Try letting each line of your poem begin with the words:

*When I lost you, I felt like . . .*

Here are three examples of using comparisons from nature:

When I lost you, I felt like a river without water.

When I lost you, I felt like a tree without leaves.

When I lost you, I felt like a bird without a song.

And if you want, you can make a painting to go along with your poem. Try making a free painting—washes and splashes and swirling colors. What colors feel right to you as you listen to your poem? What colors represent the feelings inside of you?





## GETTING TO KNOW RED FOX

(Nature/Science study, creative imagination, storytelling, art)

Storylines: *Snow coming hard and fast.*

*Wind beating.*

*The old barn door opening—  
well, that's how I imagine it—*

*When Red Fox slips in,  
finds That Hawk on a low bench.*

*Picks it up, gently, with her sharp teeth.*

*Carries it out.*

### *Invitation to Explorers*

Have you ever seen a Red Fox? They live in many different places: open areas in woodlands, brushy fields in farmlands, wetlands, in rural and suburban neighborhoods, in some parts of cities, too! They are crafty, smart, wildly creative at finding both food and shelter. And they are beautiful and graceful to see.

They have excellent hearing. Imagine being able to hear a mouse digging underground. They can run fast, jump and climb, leap, and even swim.

And they make amazing sounds: barks, howls, squeals, screams, and, when they feel very safe and happy, they can make a purring sound—like a cat!

If you like to draw or paint, look at some photographs or nature videos of Red Fox and then imagine that you can see Red Fox during the great snow storm coming into the barn. Make your own picture of that moment in the story.

For older children:

See if you can **tell, or write**, the story of the great snow storm **as if you are Red Fox**, a wild animal, and you are telling the story of what happened that day: how you felt being out in the storm, what you did, and what you discovered.

Why do you think Red Fox went into the barn? Why did Red Fox take *That Hawk* away?



## NEW WORDS TO DISCOVER IN THIS STORY

**Clay** comes from the rock at the surface of the Earth.

Rock that has felt:

The grinding of glaciers—rivers of ice

The pounding of rain and wind

The flow of rushing streams

The exploring fingers of tree roots

Until slowly, slowly, slowly

This rock becomes boulders

And boulders become stones

And stones become pebbles

And pebbles become the very small bits that make up different kinds of clay!

A **kiln** is a magic place. A special kind of oven where something shaped from clay—crumbly dried mud and water—changes into something that can last for hundreds, even thousands, of years. This change requires very high heat. Some kilns use electricity or gas. Others use wood-burning fire that must be carefully tended hour by hour. Often for days.

A **windway** is a narrow space hidden inside the mouthpiece of recorders, pennywhistles, some flutes, and ocarinas. When you blow into one of these instruments, the air flows through the windway creating the sound you hear. Windways can be shaped in different ways. And different shapes create different kinds of music.

An **ocarina** is a simple kind of flute. Often round or oval shaped with four to twelve finger holes. The name “ocarina” was first used in Italy in the 19th century. But these musical instruments have been made since ancient times. Some of the oldest ocarinas were made in the Americas. Ocarinas make fascinating sounds and are often covered with many elaborate decorations.



## RESOURCES/RELATED STORIES/MATERIALS FOR MORE ADVENTURES AND EXPLORATIONS

### Resources

**Acorn Naturalists:** [acornnaturalists.com](http://acornnaturalists.com)

A great online catalogue to browse. Look especially at Nature Circle Activity Cards for Young Children and the books featured in the section “Discovering Animal Worlds.”

**Children and Nature Network:** [Childrenandnature.org](http://Childrenandnature.org)

Founded in 2006 by a group of educators, writers, and community leaders who share a deep concern for the loss of our children’s vibrant life-giving relationship with nature. Offers programs for children and families, special events, podcasts, and abundant resources for parents and educators.

*Sharing Nature: Nature Awareness Activities for All Ages*  
by Joseph Cornell, with a foreword by Richard Louv

A rich treasure of nature games and outdoor adventures based on Joseph Cornell’s classic award-winning book *Sharing Nature with Children*.

*My Favorite Color Is Blue. Sometimes. A Journey Through Loss with Art and Color*  
by Roger Hutchison

Vibrant abstract paintings and simple but poignant words help children explore their feelings in times of loss. Can also be used as a springboard to inspire children to create their own paintings and write their own words in heartfelt times.

### Related Stories that weave together creativity, art, and nature

*A Single Shard*, by Linda Sue Park

*A Walk in the Woods*, by Nikki Grimes, illustrated by Jerry Pinkney and Brian Pinkney

*Birdsong*, by Julie Flett author and illustrator

*Dave the Potter—Artist, Poet, Slave*, by Laban Carrick Hill, illustrated by Bryan Collier

*The First Blade of Sweetgrass: A Native American Story* by Suzanne Greenlaw and Gabriel Frey illustrations by Nancy Baker

### Materials

Crayola Air-Dry Clay, a natural, non-toxic, earth clay (suitable for children 3 years and up). For making small sculpted or decorative items.

Natural Earth Paint—eco-friendly paint for children. Check out their website for more information, craft ideas and activities: [www.NaturalEarthPaint.com](http://www.NaturalEarthPaint.com)