

Educator Discussion Guide

Luna & Me: The True Story of a Girl Who Lived in a Tree To Save a Forest

by Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw

Louisiana Young Reader's Choice Nominee 2018
Grade 3-5

*Submitted by Jennifer LaBurre, Student
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ABOUT THE BOOK

Julia “Butterfly” Hill grew up as a lover of nature and explorer of forests; traits which have earned her the nickname “Butterfly” as a butterfly once spent an entire day perched on her finger! When she discovers an ancient redwood tree, Luna, marked with a blue X she does not hesitate to climb and explore. However, it is when Butterfly notices an array of tree stumps in the distance, all marked with the same blue X, that she realizes this beautiful tree is meant to be cut down. As an exercise of peaceful protest, Butterfly decides to stay in the tree until she knows that the beautiful redwood is safe from being cut down.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw studied illustration in Kansas City at the Kansas City Art Institute. While finishing school she interned with and eventually worked for Hallmark Greeting Cards designing and illustrating greeting cards for six years. She then moved to the mountains of northern New Mexico where she has lived since 2002. She is a freelance artist and designer, book author, and teacher.

Biographical information taken from the author's website at
<http://dancingelephantstudio.com/visualart/2008/04/09/bio/>
Accessed 27 July 2017.

AWARDS

2017-2018 Florida Reading Association Children's Book Award Nomination

PRE READING ACTIVITIES

Redwoods

Define what a redwood is – what makes this type of tree different or special. Discuss exactly where redwood forests can be found and share pictures with students or share an online video, if able, before reading this selection.

Deforestation

The Author's Note of *Luna & Me* details how a hillside was clear-cut and a resulting mudslide destroyed neighboring homes. Highlight the problems associated with deforestation to introduce your students to the concept before reading *Luna & Me*.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does the lumber company want to cut Luna down?
2. What are the pros and cons of harvesting trees? Discuss as a class the benefits we receive from trees, but also the consequences of cutting down too many trees.
3. What are some of the benefits we receive as individuals, a class, a community, and as a whole planet from trees? Discuss why it is important to protect these benefits.
4. What are some ways we can reduce our need to cut down trees? What steps can we take everyday to help protect the environment?
5. Imagine living in a tree. What would you have and what would you not have? Could you live in a tree for two whole years?
6. Butterfly lives in a makeshift home in Luna's branches for two years with no kitchen or bathroom. Could you go without a kitchen and bathroom for two years?
7. Why does Luna's dialogue rhyme?
8. Luna has an entire ecosystem living inside one of her hollows. Discuss with your students what an ecosystem is and how all the creatures living within Luna depend on each other and on Luna to survive. What will happen to all these living things if Luna is cut down?
9. Why do you think it took two years for Luna to finally be saved from being cut down?
10. What makes the kind of tree Luna is so special, compared to other trees in our country?

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Art:

Jenny Sue KostECKI-Shaw beautifully illustrated *Luna & Me* herself. Discuss how the author/illustrator used her illustrations to give Luna, the redwood tree, facial expressions, limbs, and actions. Have your students paint their own redwood trees as part of an art exercise.

Science:

- Research what an ecosystem is. Have students create a shoebox diorama of the small ecosystem living inside of Luna: "ferns, huckleberry, furry green moss, tiny mushrooms, bugs, chickadees, hummingbirds, chipmunks, and even a fox!" Have your students include a list of these creatures and hypothesize about how these creatures depend on each other (i.e. the fox eats the birds, the birds eat the bugs, etc.).
- Research how important trees are to our planet. Make a list on the board of all the ways trees help society. Make a contrary list of what can happen when there aren't enough trees.
- Individually or in groups ask students to each research a different type of trees that grown in the United States. Have them present their findings to the class.

Language Arts:

There are many examples of visual and textual simile and metaphor in this book. Discuss with your students what a simile and metaphor are and test them to see how many examples they can find.

Social Studies:

Butterfly's act of staying in the tree is an act of peaceful civil disobedience according to the author's note. Research other ways that people have peacefully resisted a powerful force in history and what the outcomes were. Student groups could present projects on historical figures who have used the same means to resist malevolent forces.

Math:

- Discuss with the class what diameter and circumference are. Many Redwood Trees have a diameter over 30 feet and a corresponding circumference of 94 feet or more. Cut a piece of string 94 feet long and then tie the ends together. Bring your class outside and ask the children to help you spread the string out in a circle to visualize how wide around a Redwood Tree is.
Information and activity idea from the California Department of Parks and Recreation, https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=1146.
- The text notes "Julia was born some thirteen thousand full moons later." How many days is a full moon's cycle? How many is 13,000 full moon cycles in days? Weeks? Months? Years? How many full moon cycles are the students in your class?
- The author's note states that Butterfly climbed 180 feet to Luna's canopy and that Luna was 200 feet high. Have your students use a ruler, yard stick, and/or measuring tape to measure common items around the house and estimate how many of that object it would take to reach 180 feet high.

STEAM:

Explore more about trees and their lifecycles by organizing a seeding demonstration. Discuss the lifecycle of plants and the basics of their growth. Each student will need cups, potting soil, and seeds. Have each student pot their own seedling and arrange seeds on a sunny window ledge or have student take their seedlings home. Over the next weeks continue to water and care for seedlings and observe results.

Source: <https://www.plt.org/stem-strategies/tree-lifecycle/>

Vocabulary:

Menagerie
Cathedral
Courage
Quivered
Aflutter

Cocoon
Perch
Harvested
Hoisted
Tapestry

RELATED WEBSITES

Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw

<http://dancingelephantstudio.com/visualart/>

Author's website and blog with links to author's books, biography, and blog.

National Park Service – Redwood

<https://www.nps.gov/redw/index.htm>

National Park Service's website dedicated to the Redwood National and State Parks in California. Includes information about visiting these parks, photos, park history, and educational information and videos to share with students.

Julia Butterfly Hill – Julia

<http://www.juliabutterfly.com/-julia.html>

Julia "Butterfly" Hill's biographical page from her website and blog.

Julia Butterfly Hill Descends from Luna after 738 Days 12/18/99

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RF2NIAJzBps>

Collection of original news stories from the day Julia "Butterfly" Hill descended from Luna in 1999.