

Capstone Project: Selection, Promotion, and Diversity Audit

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LIBS 6310: Materials for Literacy of Children

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Selection, Promotion, and Diversity Audit

Part 3: Selection

The following materials are selected to address and collaborate with the 6th-grade Science standards in Tennessee:

1. Lindstrom, C. (2020). *We are water protectors*. Roaring Book Press.

Genre: Picturebook

Selection Source: Caldecott Medal

Lexile Level: AD510L

Description: This book tells the story of a young Indigenous girl who stands up to the “black snake” threatening her people’s water, emphasizing that all water is sacred, all life is connected, and everyone can become a steward of Earth.

2. Tarshis, L. (2011). *I survived Hurricane Katrina, 2005*. Scholastic.

Genre: Graphic Novel

Selection Source: Nashville Public Library

Lexile Level: 590L

Description: This story follows an 11-year-old boy named Barry Tucker who is forced to stay in his New Orleans home with his family when they can’t evacuate before the storm hits because his sister is sick. When the levees break, Barry is separated from his family and must use his courage to survive the devastation. This story is vividly brought to life in this graphic-novel adaptation from the “I Survived” series.

3. Durst, S.B. (2019). *Spark*. Harper Collins.

Genre: Fantasy

Selection Source: CLCD

Lexile Level: HL690L

Review:

Reviews

Source: Booklist

Review: *Starred Review* Alorria is a perfect land of sunshine, gentle rain, and breezes whenever needed, as its weather is controlled by storm beasts and their guardians. Here, quiet Mina and her family live. Things for Mina are about to change drastically, as her storm-egg hatches after two years to reveal that her storm beast, Pixit, is a lightning beast. Her family thinks there's been a mistake; how can Mina, with her quiet, gentle nature, control a lightning beast? But off she and Pixit go to Mytris Lightning School in the Northwest Barrens. Frightened and excited, Mina wants terribly to succeed with Pixit, although mishaps seem to constantly beset them. When they fly off course in a practice storm, both are injured and cared for by people across the mountains whom Mina didn't know existed. This leads to the pair's life mission: to make the people of Alorria understand their perfect world is creating chaos for the rest of the world. Durst's fantasy is fascinating and powerful, requiring only a modicum of suspension of disbelief. The well-developed characters represent typical preteens, from the shy but deep-thinking Mina to her boisterous roommate to their two adventure-hungry teammates. The underlying theme of the book reminds readers that it only takes one spark from one child to change the world.

Although the story takes place in a fantasy setting, students can still benefit from reading about weather elements. The story portrays different weather conditions through the role of storm beasts, who can control wind, rain, sun, and lightning, and how they use their unique abilities to manage their environment. Understanding weather dynamics is an essential part of the curriculum in this fantasy novel. The book presents a world where weather is managed by magical “storm beasts” that can perform tasks like gathering electricity from lightning or directing wind. This can help students understand that the weather is a complex system and that a “perfect” and stable climate is actually artificial. Students can also learn that even with good intentions, weather control can have negative consequences, and there is a cost to maintaining “perfect” weather. This can lead to discussions about the ethics of climate control and the idea that there are no easy answers. This also sparks the idea of discussing climate control and change in relation to the current, realistic environment.

4. Sidman, J. (2021). *Hello earth! poems to our planet*. Eerdman's Books for Young Readers.

Genre: Poetry

Selection Source: Ingram

Lexile Level: 660L

Review:

Kirkus Reviews (01/01/2021):

Conversational, inquisitive, and admiring poems question, explore, and honor our Earth. An ardent, earnest collective narrative voice (identifying as the Earth's human children) directly addresses the planet throughout this dazzling collection, explaining in the first poem that "we have been studying you, Earth, / but we long to learn more." Each poem succinctly explores just one topic, allowing young readers to really ponder that individual, awe-inspiring subject. Readers find wonder in its volcanoes, deserts, plates, tides, jungles, oceans, weather, and mysteries, and they will enjoy frequent questions posed to Earth herself. "Earth, / do you love your dry places / as much as your watery ones? / Your tropics / as much as your ice?" Precise, naive illustrations place the horizon line low and employ double-page spreads to capture the Earth's great dome of sky, broad terrain, and wide waters. It's fun to locate the little people (of all skin tones), fish, dinosaurs, monkeys, snakes, cats, and more within these large illustrations--and especially fun to squint and interpret their teeny experiences on Earth. Backmatter groups poems under larger scientific headers, with explanatory paragraphs that flesh out the concepts introduced in verse. Additional resources appear as well, with URLs of child-friendly climate change and conservation websites as well as a bibliography for those interested in further reading. Lithe, accessible poetry celebrates our world's mind-boggling grandeur--and humanity's role as her steward. (Picture book/poetry, 6-12) COPYRIGHT(2021) Kirkus Reviews, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Publishers Weekly (12/07/2020):

In 22 accessible free-verse poems, Sidman (*The Girl Who Drew Butterflies*) addresses Earth as a living being, marveling at its grandeur ("Earth, / How can we ever understand/ your bigness?/ Our smallness?"), contemplating its long history ("Which was your favorite part?"), tracing its slow geological changes (in a poem called "Big Puzzle"), and celebrating the miracle of its ecosystems. Paintings by Lora (A Good Day) underscore the fragility of humankind as tiny figures travel over land and swim in the ocean, dwarfed by lush, primordial forests painted in cool shades of marine blue and pale red ochre. Sidman's final poems take on a meditative, prayerlike tone, asking Earth to give humans the will to preserve its wonders: "Help us remember/ the quiet, daily things/ we can do/ to keep your water clean/ your air fresh/ your soil full of life." Requesting that the planet supply resolve to its denizens on top of supporting life seems like a big ask, but Sidman does a credible job of demonstrating Earth's resilience. Back matter includes further details about many of the subjects treated in the poems, along with a bibliography. Ages 5-9. (Feb.)

Students can benefit from reading *Hello, Earth! Poems to Our Planet* not only learning about Earth's systems, but it can also develop empathy and social-emotional skills by gaining a deeper understanding of Earth science through the poems and back matter within the book. These poems encourage wonder about the natural world and foster a sense of stewardship, which makes complex topics like climate change and conservation more accessible. This book introduces scientific concepts such as plate tectonics, water cycles, and ecosystems through poetry that also highlights the essential content of the 6th-grade science curriculum. The back matter of the book also provides further resources and information for deeper learning, which can be used to prove the science within the poems. It is a valuable tool for engaging in teaching climate literacy.

5. Firestone, C. (2022). *The first rule of climate club*. Listening Library.

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Selection Source: CLDC

ATOS Book Level: 5

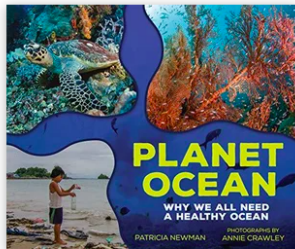
Review:**Reviews****Source:** Booklist

Review: Mary Kate Murphy is 1 of 10 incoming eighth-graders at Fisher Middle School chosen to participate in a climate-change pilot project. Warned that this will be a non-traditional commitment, the group begins investigating ways within their community to help save the planet. Initially, the students struggle to find their niches but eventually realize they can be more effective when they work cooperatively. Unfortunately, the group encounters an obstacle in the form of the towns mayor, who is resistant to its ideas. Meanwhile, Mary Kates BFF is suffering from an undiagnosed illness. Applying her abundant pluck and drive, Mary Kate spearheads efforts to help her friend regain her health. Firestone has created a lively and inspiring companion to her successful *Dress Coded* (2020). Using podcasts, letters, and a variety of other devices, she covers a broad range of ills with realistic energy. This novel addresses more than climate change, also touching on equity and inclusion as well as traditional and natural healing methods. Readers will cheer as the students actions bring about positive change.

6. Newman, P. (2021). *Planet ocean: why we all need a healthy ocean*. Millbrook/Lerner.

Genre: Nonfiction**Selection Source:** Orbis Pictus Award**Lexile Level:** 1030L**Review:**

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Dive with Annie Crawley through three strikingly different undersea worlds to see how climate change endangers them all.

"We all have a story to tell" photographer Crawley says. In her daily life, she teaches land-dwellers to dive in the ocean, encouraging them to appreciate it and to share its beauty—and its problems. Newman's words and Crawley's pictures do just that for young readers here, with a clear narrative that combines science, images, and the voices of young divers and Indigenous peoples to get across their point. "The ocean is us," says Crawley; helping the ocean helps us all. An introduction points out that maps emphasize landmasses, dividing and diminishing the ocean, which, in truth, covers 70% of the Earth. Chapter by chapter, the writer follows the dive instructor and her team visiting the Coral Triangle in southeast Asia, the Salish Sea in western North America, and the Arctic at "the top of the world." There are also intriguing photographs (alas, not all clearly captioned), maps and charts, and short essays introducing other photographers, activists, scientists, and even a composer, all of whom work to care for the ocean and to tell its story. QR codes lead to further illustrative videos on the publisher's website. The range of nationalities represented and the inclusion of a variety of Indigenous voices make a particularly compelling argument that ocean health is a whole world problem. The backmatter includes tips on visual storytelling and actions readers can take to help the oceans.

Worth exploring in depth. (author and photographer's note, glossary, source notes, further resources) (*Nonfiction*. 10-14)

Students can benefit from this nonfiction material by gaining foundational knowledge about the ocean's critical role in the environment and human life, being inspired to take conservation action through real-life stories, and learning how their actions can impact ocean health. This all relates to the curriculum by discussing the importance of the sea, helping students understand the ocean's influence on them and their influence on the sea. They can also learn about the various ocean ecosystems and

the ocean's vital role in regulating the climate and generating oxygen. Not only does the book discuss the ocean's role in Earth's environment, it also encourages students to become activists for a healthy ocean. Students can see that their personal actions can create a change and learn about successful conservation efforts.

7. Loach, M. (2025). *Climate is just the start: how we can stop the climate crisis and start building a better world for everyone*. Random House.

Genre: Nonfiction

Selection Source: Children's Core Collection

Lexile Level: 990L

Description: The author is also a UK-based climate activist who explains the climate crisis and its broader social implications, delivering a message of hope and excitement for the opportunity to create a sustainable future for Earth.

8. Water Cycle. (2021). In *Gale Middle School Online Collection*. Gale.

https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/OWCMUX538255260/MSIC?u=tel_k_telms&sid=bookmark-MSIC&xid=ac8d8880

Genre: Online Resource

Selection Source: Tennessee Electronic Library

Lexile Level: 910L

Description: This article discusses the hydrologic cycle and how it works in nature. It also touches on the inconsistent cycle and how some places experience different conditions depending on precipitation irregularity.

9. Muñoz Ryan, P. (2025). *El Niño*. Scholastic.

Genre: Fantasy/Realistic Fiction

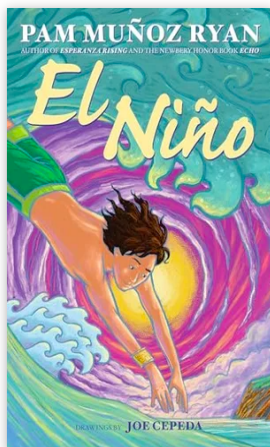
Selection Source: Kirkus

Lexile Level: 740L

Description:

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A compelling tale of love, loss, and myth.



San Diego boy Kai Sosa's older sister, Cali, was a championship swimmer; two years ago, she disappeared in a dense ocean fog and is presumed dead.

When Kai is recruited by Cali's elite swim team, he faces the pressure of living up to her legacy while navigating his grief and struggling to reclaim his competitive edge in the sport. The coaches have an unorthodox approach that leaves Kai and his teammates questioning whether they'll be ready to compete. Amid this turmoil, Kai discovers an overdue library book that Cali borrowed, *The Elusive Island of California*. It's filled with lore about Queen Califia and a mythical submerged island. The book's tales of gold, a Library of Despair and Sorrow, and a mysterious underwater realm strike an eerie chord with Kai. As vivid dreams and sleepwalking episodes draw him to the ocean, Mexican American Kai begins to wonder if the legendary island could actually exist and if the myths might hold clues to Cali's disappearance. Blending the emotional depth of grief with the intrigue of mythology, Ryan's story explores the intersection of family, resilience, and natural weather cycles in Southern California. The magic of the Califia legend is tempered by the reality of life after loss, and both aspects of the story are richly detailed. The navy blue font and Cepeda's striking illustrations complement the uniquely beautiful story. *(This review was updated for clarity.)*

A compelling tale of love, loss, and myth. (author's note) (Fiction. 8-13)

El Niño incorporates scientific information about ocean currents, storms, and geography, making complex concepts about Earth's systems more accessible through storytelling. The book provides students with a narrative to understand the ocean-atmosphere phenomenon of El Niño, which sparks their curiosity to research specific scientific facts and ask their own questions. This approach can also bridge the gap between scientific literature and engaging narrative that promote a deeper understanding of Earth's systems. It also supports interdisciplinary learning, as it can be used alongside other resources to enhance STEM learning by providing context and sparking questions for further research while connecting science with storytelling. It helps students see how specific weather elements can be explained through a story, making the text more memorable and engaging than the textbook alone. This will be great for supplementary learning, as teachers can use it as an alternative resource to tie these elements into their curriculum.

Part 4: Promotion

Book talk links are provided below:

- Lindstrom, C. (2020). *We are water protectors*. Roaring Book Press.

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/-yQzWl96FXY>

- Muñoz Ryan, P. (2025). *El Niño*. Scholastic.

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/YzKP60TQ928>

Part 5: Diversity and Inclusivity Audit

It is essential to provide inclusive perspectives not only in the library but also in the classrooms. This ensures that all students see themselves reflected in mirrors and learn about others, who are the windows in the literary world. Performing this audit also ensures that students foster empathy, belonging, and diverse perspectives by revealing gaps in representation and guiding the development of richer, more representative learning materials for everyone. Based on the inclusivity audit, the majority of this collection features diverse, inclusive content across its characters and authors.

One of the materials, *Spark*, proves to be the least diverse. According to Kirkus, race is not mentioned in the review or the book, so it is assumed to be from the white perspective. Although the main character is quiet and introverted, this emphasizes that students' voices and contributions are just as important as those of louder students. In the graphic novel, *I Survived Hurricane Katrina, 2005*, the author makes an inclusive representation choice, centering Black lives in a crisis. However, after a thorough audit, the book's primary goal is to tell an excellent adventure story. It does not perform a comprehensive sociological analysis of racial inequality during Katrina. The poetry book, *Hello Earth! Poems to Our Planet* is generally inclusive in its representation of diverse people in the illustrations. However, its primary focus is Earth-centered

rather than a deep exploration of varied cultural perspectives. In all, the book presents a universal message of environmental stewardship that applies to all people. The book's primary goal is to bring people together through the shared experience of living on Earth.

Carrie Firestone's *The First Rule of Climate Club* actively promotes inclusivity and equity by integrating themes of environmental justice, racism, and social inequality directly into the main plot. The book itself acts as a commentary on these issues rather than needing an external audit to identify the faults. It is designed with an inclusive lens, focusing on how environmental problems disproportionately affect the already marginalized communities.

Another climate book, *Planet Ocean: Why We All Need A Healthy Ocean*, highlights that a healthy ocean is a shared human right for all people, essential for everyone's oxygen, food, climate, and health. This audit ensures that "ocean health" is not just about fish stocks or coral reefs, but about safeguarding the fundamental human rights and well-being of *all* people.

Activist Mikaela Loach also argues for an inclusive approach to climate action that integrates social justice in her book, *Climate Is Just The Start: How Can We Stop The Climate Crisis and Start Building a Better World for Everyone*. Loach calls for a movement where the fight against the climate crisis must also address broader issues of social inequity, unfairness, racism, and poverty, as these marginalized communities are often the first and worst affected.

Lastly, *El Niño* by Pam Muñoz Ryan features a strong focus on Hispanic heritage, a neurodivergent character, and an emotionally driven narrative. The author's personal heritage and inclusion of a neurodivergent character and strong female characters contribute significantly to its inclusivity. Overall, the book appears to provide a diverse reading experience through its diverse cultural framework, emotional depth, and varied character representations. Looking back, a movie or audiobook can be an additional resource to the collection in order to provide materials

for all students. While focusing on diversity, there is a miss on the inclusivity for reluctant or visual learners. In a real classroom, the librarian should conduct an initial audit of students to ensure they are using all tools and materials to provide the best collection for the curriculum. Digital tools, such as e-books, databases, and online resources, are essential to the collection to meet diverse needs, such as those of non-native speakers. These are a few materials missing from this collection. However, in all, the collection contains both diverse, inclusive characters and themes and adheres to the TN Science Standards.