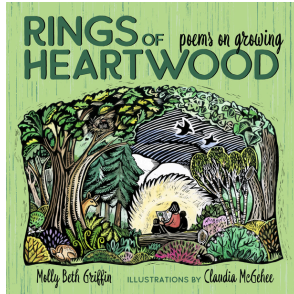


TEACHER'S GUIDE



Rings of Heartwood: Poems on Growing

Written by Molly Beth Griffin

Illustrations by Claudia McGehee

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Growth is exciting—bigger, faster, stronger! But sometimes leaving behind our younger selves is hard. From bugs to bats to bears, the natural world shows us how to embrace transformation as part of life.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS AND ACTIVITIES

- Count tree rings on a real stump to find out the tree's age. Remember, the tree adds one dark and one light ring per year.
- The world is full of noise! Listen to recordings of cicadas buzzing, spring peepers, rattlesnakes, and bird songs. The Merlin app (from Cornell Lab) can help ID birds by song—go outside and see what birds live and sing around your school. Look for all the cardinals in the illustrations in this book. What sounds do cardinals make?
- What is something you have outgrown that was important to you? What is something new you received as you have grown?
- Fawns' spots help them blend into their surroundings. What other animals have camouflage? Why is this an important adaptation?
- Possums are nocturnal, meaning they are awake at night and sleep during the day. What other animals are nocturnal? What are the benefits of sleeping during the day?
- Metamorphosis is when an animal's body changes completely during its life cycle. Which animals in this book go through metamorphosis? How do those animals change throughout their lifetime?
- Learn about hibernation—what animals hibernate, like the bears in the book, and why? How is hibernation different from just sleeping?
- Do some yoga and stretching together. Pretend to be a fern and unfurl your whole body from the ground up. Make up poses/movements for other plants and animals.
- Research an animal that is near extinction or once was. Learn about their habitat, food, predators and life cycle. Why are (were) they near extinction? How can (did) they come back? What roles did humans play?

ADVANCED PROJECTS

SEL/LITERACY: Focus on one spread of the book. Read the poem and nonfiction together and then discuss (think-pair-share) what emotion(s) the animal might be feeling. For example, on the ducklings page, the babies might feel nervous about leaving the nest, they might be anxious or worried about jumping, they might feel brave or proud when they jump, they might feel relieved afterward when they are safe with their mother, they might then be excited to explore the larger world. Have each student choose an emotion that they can connect with, and write or draw in a journal about a time when they felt that way.

SCIENCE/ART: Ask the students to pick an animal that goes through a life cycle (i.e. butterfly, cicada, frog). Cut out a circle from paper and divide it into the number of stages that animal goes through. Draw the animal at each stage, in order going around the circle. Add labels to the drawing, and arrows showing how the animal moves through the stages of its life. Use the book for reference, and/or research with other tools from the library or internet.

SCIENCE/LITERACY: Have each student choose an animal they are interested in and research that animal using library resources or reliable websites. Use whatever note-taking or annotation strategies they've practiced in class. When they discover a fact that they feel is fascinating, write it down or highlight it. Then craft a poem from that fact, using a first-person narrator ("I") and imagining that the writer is the animal. Talk about using imagery, emotion, sound and rhythm, and line breaks. Read the poem to the class. **ART ADD-ON:** Make an animal mask to wear while reading the poem aloud.

Molly Beth Griffin is the author of *Ten Beautiful Things* and *Rhoda's Rock Hunt*, among many other books for young readers. She lives in Minneapolis.

Claudia McGehee is the illustrator and sometimes author of many picture books, including *Begin with a Bee*, *Creekfinding*, and *My Wilderness*. She lives in Iowa City, Iowa.

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