

Books, Authors that Celebrate Nature Through the Eyes of Youth

The books and authors described here are especially good at helping young people explore and connect with our natural world.

Planting a Rainbow

By Lois Ehlert

Bold collages follow a mother and daughter as they plant bulbs, seeds, and seedlings and watch them grow into a rainbow of colorful flowers.

This educational and enjoyable picture book helps children understand plant life cycles.

Visit the Youth Garden; see if you can find all the colors of the rainbow.

Lois Ehlert (1934 – 2021) was an American author and illustrator of children's books. Her work reflected her love of nature and gardens. Ehlert created numerous inventive, celebrated, and bestselling picture books, including the popular *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*. Ehlert received many awards including the Caldecot Award for *Color Zoo* in 1990.

Author Photograph: ©Lillian Schultz

Book Cover: Simon & Schuster,

<https://www.simonandschuster.com/authors/Lois-Ehlert/1877089>

The Gardener

By Sarah Stewart

The Gardener is a picture book by American children's book author Sarah Stewart, illustrated by her husband, David Small. Lydia Grace Finch brings a suitcase full of seeds, plenty of stationery, and a passion for gardening to the big gray city, where she goes to stay with her Uncle Jim, a cantankerous baker. There she initiates a gradual transformation, brightening the bakery and bringing smiles to customers' faces with the flowers she grows. But it is in a secret place that Lydia Grace works on her masterpiece, which she hopes will be powerful enough to make even Uncle Jim smile.

How many different types of seeds or seedpods can you find in the Youth Garden?

Sarah Stewart (1939--). As a child, Sarah Stewart's favorite pursuits were digging and daydreaming in her grandmother's gardens, or reading and writing poetry in a large closet in her parents' house. As an adult gardening and writing remain at the center of her life. Sarah is the author of five acclaimed children's books all illustrated by her husband David Small. Their books have won many awards including: 1997 New York Times Book Review Notable Children's Book of the Year and a 1998 Caldecott Honor Book for *The Gardener*. In addition, David Small's illustrations, earned a Christopher Award, which is given annually to celebrate works of art that affirm the highest values of the human spirit.

Photo Credit: © David Small

<https://ourwhitehouse.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Sarah-Stewart.png> Copyright David Small, <https://ourwhitehouse.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Sarah-Stewart.png>

Esperanza Rising

Pam Muñoz Ryan

Esperanza Rising is a historical fiction novel that tells about a young girl's immigration to the United States from Mexico in the 1930s. The book starts with Papa teaching Esperanza to be patient, to respect the cycles of nature, and to hear the heartbeat of the land. After losing her father Esperanza starts over as a migrant farm worker in the US. The connection with nature learned from her father is one factor that helps her overcome the many challenges in her new life.

What do the Yellow Roses symbolize in this story?

Pam Muñoz Ryan (1951--) From picture books to novels to nonfiction, Pam Muñoz Ryan writes a wide variety of books for young readers. Drawing from her diverse cultural background, Muñoz Ryan often writes about the Latino experience in the United States. *Esperanza Rising* is a novel that Muñoz Ryan based on her own grandmother's immigration from Mexico to California. *Esperanza Rising*, perhaps her most well-known novel, won the Pura Belpré Medal in 2000.

Photo: [https://kids.kiddle.co/Image:Pam Muñoz Ryan smiling.jpg](https://kids.kiddle.co/Image:Pam_Muñoz_Ryan_smiling.jpg)

Titch

By Pat Hutchins

Titch is little. Everything he has is little, from his little pinwheel to his little tricycle. His brother Pete and his sister Mary are big. Everything they have is bigger and better than what Titch has. Their kites fly high above the houses and trees, and their bicycles are large and fast. But when Titch plants a little seed, it begins to grow...and grow...and grow!

Visit the youth garden and measure how tall the sunflower has grown.

Pat Hutchins (1942-2017) was born in Yorkshire, England, and grew up in the surrounding countryside, which she loved. Her childhood sketches of woodland creatures led to an award-winning career as a children's book writer and illustrator, "She respected the intelligence of children so much," Virginia Duncan, the vice president and publisher of Greenwillow Books, an imprint of HarperCollins, which published many of Ms. Hutchins's books, said in an interview. "Her books are playful, suspenseful and great to read aloud."

Photo Source: <https://i.harperapps.com/authors/17047/x500.JPG>

Grandpa Cacao

A Tale of Chocolate, From Farm to Family

By Elizabeth Zunon

This beautifully illustrated story connects past and present as a girl bakes a chocolate cake with her father who tells the story of Grandpa Cacao farmer in West Africa. Grandpa Cacao worked in his village to harvest cacao, the most important ingredient in chocolate.

"Chocolate is a gift to you from Grandpa Cacao," Daddy says. "We can only enjoy chocolate treats thanks to farmers like him." Once the cake is baked, it's ready to eat, but this isn't her only birthday present. There's a special surprise waiting at the front door . . .

Can you find something in the Youth Garden that smells like Cacao?

Elizabeth Zunon. Drawing and painting have always been among the most important things to Elizabeth Zunon. She was born in Albany, NY and grew up in the Ivory Coast, West Africa. Surrounded by the bright, vibrant colors of everyday West African fabrics and tropical vegetation, Elizabeth's love of color and pattern only grew. Her illustrated picture book *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* was chosen as one of Amazon's Best Children's Books of 2012. *Grandpa Cacao: a Tale of Chocolate, from Farm to Table* was her first author-illustrated book.

Author Photo Source: https://images-na.ssl-images-amazon.com/images/I/71zHtxPJJqL._UY200_.jpg