

DREAM FOR THE LAND

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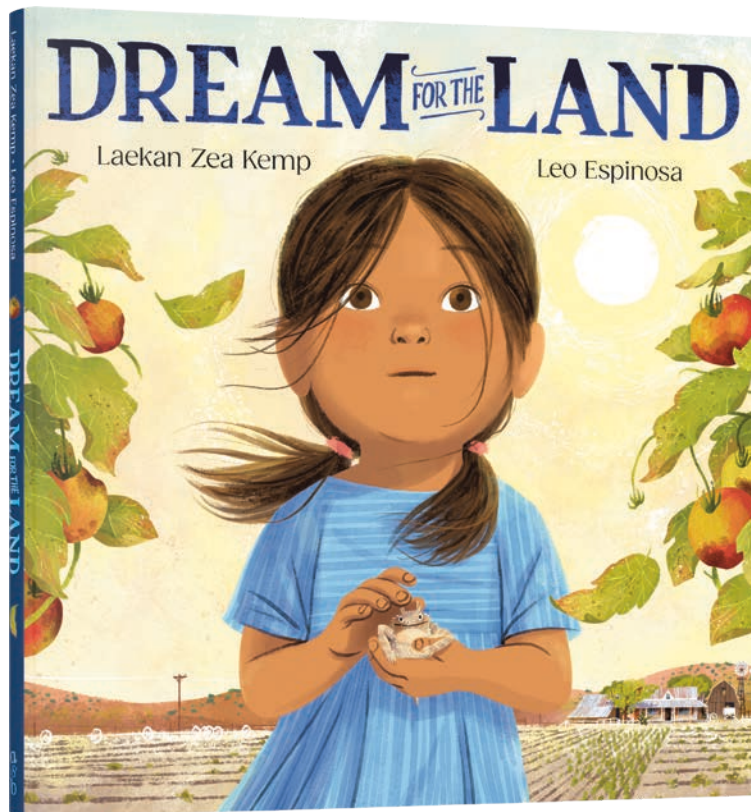


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DREAM FOR THE LAND

Activities



About the Book

When a girl finds a horned toad among the rain-starved squash, tomatoes, and poblanos on her family's Texas farm, her pa tells her that if she kisses it on the head, she gets to make one wish.

Generations ago, when the girl's ancestors lived on this land, it was lush and green—full of life. Now, because of a decades-long drought, the soil is parched and the crops are dying.

The girl sees the worry lines on Pa's face getting deeper. She knows she has to do *something* to help. And so, thinking about the people who lived on this land before her, and all those who will live on it after her, she wishes for rain.

This poignant story reminds us that, when it comes to healing our Earth, change often starts with a simple wish.



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Before Reading

Pair with science lessons on or suggest to readers interested in:

- The water cycle
- Weather
- Ecosystems
- Climate change

Pair with social studies lessons on or suggest to readers interested in:

- Climate change
- Civic participation
- Scarcity and its impacts on decision making
- Social action
- Traditions and customs

Pair with ELA lessons on:

- Family history
- Environmental awareness

Establish Background Knowledge

Ask students what they know about **climate change**. Fill in gaps in student knowledge as necessary. Be sure to call out that climate change is triggered by human activity that is causing more extreme and unpredictable weather over a long period of time. Guiding questions might include:

- What are some examples of the unpredictable weather you have observed or heard adults talk about?
- Why and how is climate change causing unpredictable weather?

Ask students if they have heard of **environmental justice**. Fill in gaps in student knowledge with this adapted version of the EPA's definition: "Environmental justice

[is] the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies." Talk about what this means.

Severe Weather Word Walls

Ask students to research some of the extreme and unpredictable weather that climate change is causing and will cause in the future. Define types of weather and create a word wall to keep weather top of mind. You might start with: *drought, flood, heatwave, tornado, thunderstorm*. Discuss the impact that each of these types of weather could have on humans, wildlife, and food production. Ask: Who is most likely to be affected by these extreme types of weather? Discuss how this relates to environmental justice.



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Discussion Questions



Discuss As You Read

- Looking at the cover and the title pages, where do you think this book takes place? What details lead you to that conclusion? Characterize this ecosystem.
- How would you describe the main character? How would you describe her father? How would you characterize their relationship?
- What type of severe weather is taking place? How do you know?
- Who are the other characters in the story? How do the illustrations help you to know this?
- What is the girl's ancestors' relationship to the land? How do you know?
- Why does she kiss the toad? What does this represent?
- Notice the colors the illustrator uses throughout. How do colors work to make the author's message clear?

Discuss After You Read

- Be sure to read the author's note. How does the author's note impact your understanding of the story?
- How do you think you would respond to the conflict in the story? How might you feel?
- What problems would a drought cause in your community? What problems would a megadrought cause?
- Where do you see the effects of climate change in this story? What can we do to combat climate change?
- Why is the land important?
- How is a wish a powerful thing?



Extension Activities

- Conserve water and encourage businesses to do the same.
 - Calculate your water footprint. How much water do you use every day? [Watercalculator.org](https://www.watercalculator.org).
 - Do research on calculating a business's water footprint. What are all the different ways that businesses use water?
 - Host a competition to see who can reduce their water use the most. Make saving water a competition in your community, and invite various groups, businesses, and politicians to participate. Call on politicians and local news organizations to amplify your efforts and educate the public about this cause.
 - Do research on the watersheds in your area. Learn about the condition of your local watersheds: mywaterway.epa.gov.
 - Healthy watersheds are essential for a healthy environment. Plan a community cleanup day in watershed areas. Invite local businesses and corporations to participate, too.
- Create a drought-resistant garden.
 - Plant a drought-resistant community garden or add drought-tolerant plants to an existing garden. Do research on the types of plants that thrive in your environment. Get children involved in planting, weeding, and watering, and calculating their water footprint as they tend to it.
 - Post signage that explains the intention behind the garden and your hope for the future.
 - It's been said that planting a tree is a symbol of hope. How so?
- Work with a local organization or community-led initiative to address environmental racism. Invite a guest speaker to give a talk. After learning more about what your community most needs, write a letter that addresses an issue of environmental injustice. You could advocate for policy changes recommended by your partner organization, or your letter could:
 - Voice support for composting initiatives and mandates for businesses.
 - Advocate for more green spaces, like parks and gardens, in marginalized communities.
 - Advocate for an increase in cooling centers during heatwaves.
 - Or address any other issue that is relevant to you or your community.



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