



Where the Forest Meets the Sea

Jeannie Baker

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My father says there has been a forest here for over a hundred million years," Jeannie Baker's young protagonist tells us, and we follow him on a visit to this tropical rain forest in North Queensland, Australia.

We walk with him among the ancient trees as he pretends it is a time long ago, when extinct and rare animals lived in the forest and aboriginal children played there. But for how much longer will the forest still be there, he wonders?

Jeannie Baker's lifelike collage illustrations take the reader on an extraordinary visual journey to an exotic, primeval wilderness, which like so many others is now being threatened by civilization.

Where the Forest Meets the Sea Details

Date : Published 1988 by Greenwillow Books (first published January 1st 1987)

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Author : Jeannie Baker

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booklady says

The three dimensional-like pictures in this book are especially appealing to visual learners of all ages. Baker also makes use of fading to show imaginary figures which the bright children I was reading to picked up on right away. There is little text but that only further enhances the book: what needs to be said is and the rest is left to the adult and child to talk about as much or as little as they please. My audience of three (ages 8-3) were very involved in this book. They liked to talk and comment on each page and this was the kind of book which offered many opportunities for interesting conversation.

Salma Khatun says

The book is about a young Australian boy, who's father takes him to a Rain forest by boat. The young boy explores the rain forest and pretends it is a long time ago when extinct animals lived. As he travels through the rain forest, he finds 'ghostly' images, including a dinosaur, a young aboriginal child and a holiday resort build by the sea. When the young boys exploration comes to an end, he leaves the forest wondering if he would ever return to its preserved condition.

I enjoyed reading this book as it was beautifully illustrated and there were hidden images which were exciting to find. There book also contains a deeper message about environment, deforestation and what impact of civilization. The appropriate age range for this book would be from year one to year seven. It can be used to explore the topic of rain forest. For example, a year one class can use this book for their art lesson's as the book contains detailed images of the rain forest. Upper key stage two and lower key stage three can use this book for geography as the book allows discussion of the environment and the impact of civilization on certain environments.

Sophie Mc says

'Where the Forest Meets the Sea' by Jeannie Baker is a picture book at its' very best. The book uses beautiful illustrations to delicately highlight the important of nature. Through the use of ghostly images, the reader is sent on a mission to find the previous creatures that once lived in the habitat, highlighting how human activity has changed the landscape. This book is a fantastic resource for the teaching of habitats in both Geography and Science. Due to the nature of the book with its' fantastic images, it can be used across a wide range of ages. The book itself provokes questioning; what impact have humans had on our planet? How can we preserve our environment? etc. The book also lends itself nicely to aiding those children with EAL and SEN as the images are extremely clear and bold. This book is very thought provoking and detailed and really impacts the reader; a fantastic resource!

Kathryn says

This is a beautiful book! Baker's collage art is amazing. I really enjoyed how the little boy thinks back to all the things that the tropical forest (in North Queensland, Australia) has seen over the years, like dinosaurs roaming and aboriginal children playing in the huge trees. And I certainly appreciate the message of wanting to preserve the forest because it becomes but a distant memory itself. I'm just not sure I felt as moved as I ought to have been, given all of this. Still, it's definitely a worthwhile read if you're a fan of Baker's work and/or looking for a book on modern Australia that doesn't focus on kangaroos and koalas!

Lisa Vegan says

This is the fourth book by this author illustrator I've read. The collage illustrations are unbelievably superb, just wonderful. As with her other fiction picture books, she includes an author's note at the end where she shares a bit about the environmental peril we're in, in this case the wet tropical rain forest wilderness and Great Barrier Reef in Australia. I love what Baker is doing regarding using her considerable artistic talent to try to make a difference in environmental preservation. The collages are top notch. I was somewhat less enamored of the story (my favorite book by her is nearly wordless) and (while I'm sure it's true to culture) I wasn't enthusiastic about her showing as a positive the killing, cooking, and eating of fish in a book purporting to try to save the environment. But, I do admire her message and am a huge fan of her pictures.

Sharah McConville says

I loved this book so much as a child! I found it at our local library recently and decided to borrow it out to show my kids. When it was scanned the librarian told me that my copy had been cancelled and I could keep the book!

Angela says

This is a beautiful book which I'd highly recommend. It is told in the first person by a young boy who goes out exploring with his father in the rainforest. The story is based in the Daintree rainforest area in North Queensland, Australia. The father takes his son out on a boat and while the father sits on the beach the boy goes walking through the rainforest. There is not very much text in this book (1 or 2 sentences per page) but it is an extremely visual and engaging book. To simply read this book and but it back on the shelf would be to do it an injustice. The illustrations are really fabulous and quite unique. They are created in a way that makes them look 3-dimensional. You want to put your hand on the pages and feel the different textures, except it is just normal paper. As the boy rambles through the rainforest he thinks about people and animals that have been here before him long ago. Images of these people and creatures are faintly imbedded in the illustrations and you have to try to find them. This is a really nice way to draw a young reader into the story. The story ends with a very strong message about conservation versus urban development, when we are presented with an image of what the rainforest may look like in the future; the trees have been destroyed and

a tourist resort has been built. While the importance of this issue may be lost a little on younger readers it is still a beautiful tale, and a nice way to introduce environmental/conservation issues to children from a young age.

I would recommend this book for kids from EYFS stage to year 2. There is lots of scope for discussion around this book, for example, talking about the things which the boy encounters, comparing and contrasting the boys environment to places your pupils have been, trying to find things hidden in the illustrations and considering what it would be like if the trees were cut down and replaced with buildings.

This book has great potential for cross curricular links –English literacy, physical geography (on the last page of the story there is a map of Australia which identifies the location of the Daintree, the book could also be used as a basis for a lesson on rainforests and different environments), history (considering change over time, people and creatures who have come before us and what things may be like in the future).

What is also nice about this book is that it's from an Australian author and I haven't come across many (any?) good children's books from Australia. It is nice to have a bit of international variety!

Liz says

This book was so hard to get a hold of in my school library and once you did all the pages were crinkled & smeared with grubby primary school kids fingerprints and drool.

I myself would borrow this book as often as I could and just stare at the pictures....I so wished it had texture because I really wanted to touch it too....which I refrained from because of the drool.

I forgot all about this book, but I am getting my own copy so that I may spend hours staring opened mouth, drooling and running my grubby mits all over this book.

Robbi says

In this story, Jeannie Baker shows us how things change, but through the eyes of a Australian young boy. This story is based in North Queensland, Australia and we walk through a lovely, tropical rainforest with this young boy and his father- as he pretends to walk through time, past, present and future. We go from seeing extinct and pre-historic animals, to seeing the future vast developments of green-land becoming industrialised. As we look into the future apprehensions for the forest, we (along with the boy) are faced with the question: How much longer will this forest be here?

I really enjoyed this story and especially loved the illustrations in the book, as they are in fact photos of handmade collages made by Jeannie Baker herself. The lifelike collages felt like an export on to a journey through an exotic rainforest and had me hooked right up to the end where I saw how, like so many other nature filled areas, are "now being threatened by civilisation". The various hidden images were also a joy the seek out.

I think this book is perfect for children from ages 5 to 9. It would be a great book to use in guided reading and would also be a good story from which the children could create a creative writing piece, based upon the future predictions of land developments within the story, their local area and/or even the city they live in. It links in with Geography and so I think it would be a good tool for children to create illustrations of what they think might happen to the forest or (again) their local area within the next 10 years, for example.

Jonathan says

This is a story of a young boy and his father visiting a rain forest in Australia. They travel in their boat the "Time Machine" The boat lives up to its name, as when they arrive at the prehistoric rain forest, ancient animals appear to the reader in the illustrations in faint outlines. The boy sets off to explore, pretending he is travelling back in time. We see things through his eyes as the old forest reveals its past. When the boy returns to his father on the beach, a vision of the future appears and we are left with questioning what will happen to the forest as the modern world encroaches.

The story is illustrated with a high degree of artistic flair and the drawings fill the pages capturing the essence of the rain forest. The book is enjoyable to read and provokes questions about the environment and natural world. Although there is not much of a plot to the book, the artwork keeps the reader enthralled. The book could usefully be used in key stage one as a story book, or in key stage two as an introduction to a geography topic or a stimulus in a philosophy for children session.

Emma Southam says

I would use this book with a KS2 class and discuss what the book is trying to tell us about the developing world. Asking the children how they feel about this, but also why sometimes, sadly, this is necessary. I think it is a great learning tool.

Emma says

This book literally gave me goose pimples! It may not be for everyone but as I love Australia and anything to do with the environment this was the whole package. Everything from the collage illustrations to the imaginative elements of long lost dinosaurs and prehistoric beasts, it simply captivated me. The story is very simple but because of this it really makes the book unique. There is no dramatic or intricate storyline so can be used for a wide array of curriculum subjects. The book like all of Jeannie Bakers, has a conservation element but not too obvious or forceful. The simple story and illustration leaves the reader decide their own thoughts and opinions.

The story is about a boy who goes fishing one day with his father on a small boat to a beautiful and isolated part of the Australian mangrove forest. The boy describes the scenes very simply and the illustrations compliment the serenity. While his father prepares the fish they caught on the barbecue the boy goes on an adventure. He roams the mysterious forest while imagining the long lost inhabitants of animals and the Aboriginal people. The illustrations cleverly conceal images of what might have been which would be excellent for KS1 students in guided reading to point out and describe. The last page has a very different feel and gives an image of a modern beach with hotels and ice-cream. I found this to be the interesting part as the individual chooses what they value and which scene is more important to them. This would be great in many subject areas such as creative writing, geography, PSHE, drama and history. The book is also large and so could be read in class together with lots of discussion.

Elys says

This visually stunning book is set in the Australian outback. A boy goes on a boat trip with his father to a remote reef, where he wanders through the unspoilt rainforest, imagining the animals and people who have lived there. As they leave, the boy wonders if he will ever be able to return, as the reef is under threat from potential developers.

The pictures are beautiful, and are photographs of reliefs rather than being illustrations. The reliefs show the faint outline of the boy's imagined dinosaurs, rainforest animals and Aboriginal children who once lived in the forest. They also show the threat of hotels, swimming pools and televisions that hangs over the area.

The book ends with an explanation that the reef is real, as is the threat of development. I used this book with Year 1 as part of the 'Our Environment' topic. It is a great text to use to introduce themes of protecting the environment and sustainability, and to discuss the ways in which communities and places change over time, not always for the better.

Nasrin says

This is a great book to use for guided reading partly because of the beautiful illustrations in the book opens up great discussions. This is a story about a boy and his father who go on a visit to an Island. The illustrator captured beautiful real life like images. Although there aren't many sentences in the book, it nevertheless is suitable for children up to key stage 2 on the basis that the intricate pictures can get children to talk about it. For example, why don't many people go to the Island? You can get children to think why some places there aren't many people there, example due to no housing, no transport, no food etc makes living difficult. The ending of the book shows the Island turned into a city area gradually over. You can tie this in perfectly in any topic sessions like geography based on environment and get children to think why some places are losing their natural places and we can do to help environment. Another key point to add is that all children of all levels can join in with discussing about the book as the pictures speak more to the readers. I think this is a great book to consider for guided reading.

Manybooks says

Now while I have generally rather enjoyed (and most definitely appreciated) this book, and have on an entirely aesthetic level absolutely cherished the detailed and intricate collage like illustrations, in my opinion, Jeannie Baker's Where the Forest Meets the Sea would probably if not even actually work much better as a wordless offering, namely because Baker's accompanying illustrations are just so much more detailed and intricate than the rather sparse and in my opinion quite majorly unimaginative text (which I also think rather does limit the pictures as a whole, since the fact remains that without the author/illustrator's limited and limiting narrative, there would in my opinion be much more scope for the imagination, for independent storytelling, as well as discussions concerning Australia's rainforests, their grandeur, but also the modern, mostly man-made threats they are currently facing and experiencing).

And apropos to the illustrations of Where the Forest Meets the Sea, although yes, I really and truly have very much enjoyed them and their minute, exquisite detail, it does kind of bother me more than a trifle that Jeannie Baker has supposedly made use of preserved and collected natural materials for her collages (as the

author's note at the back seems to definitely indicate this). Now considering that rainforests the world over are often if not generally fragile and threatened, I really do hope that NONE of the collected and preserved natural materials have come from the area (from the rainforest) being depicted and described in Where the Forest Meets the Sea (however, I do have the uncomfortable and sad sneaking suspicion that this might very well be the case, that Jeannie Baker might have, indeed, and likely willingly, knowingly used collected and preserved rainforest materials for her collages, which would be a major bone of contention with and for me).
