

Reading *Rachel Carson and Her Book . . .*

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SUMMARY

During this activity, you and your child will actively read *Rachel Carson and Her Book That Changed the World*, using the suggested reading strategies.

FOCUS

Through this activity, your child will have fun while learning about the life of Rachel Carson and her impact on America. In the process, your child will build reading skills and develop vocabulary.

TIME

- 30 minutes

RECOMMENDED AGE GROUP

This activity will work best for children in kindergarten to 4th grade.

YOU NEED

- This reading guide
- *Rachel Carson and Her Book That Changed the World* book, written by Laurie Lawlor and illustrated by Laura Beingessner
- *Step Back in Time* sheets (*attached*)

CHALLENGE WORDS

- **biologist:** a scientist who studies plant and animal life
- **declining:** becoming fewer in number
- **firestorm:** a sudden public debate
- **fragrant:** having a sweet smell
- **insecticides:** chemicals used to kill insects
- **outskirts:** parts of a town that are far from its center
- **putrid:** bad; foul
- **refuge:** a place that provides shelter or protection
- **shoddy:** poorly done

More information at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/environment/>.



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PARENT PREPARATION

- If you have time, read *Rachel Carson and Her Book . . .* yourself before sharing it with your child. Also read the notes on the last page of the book and the *Step Back in Time* sheets.
- If you have time, preview the reading suggestions below. Pick just a few suggestions that look interesting and fun for you.

BEFORE YOU READ

- What do you know about taking care of the planet? Do you have any activities at home or at school that help to take care of the environment?
- Think of some of your favorite books. Do you know anything about the person who wrote those books? Do you think a book could change the world?

DURING READING

- Setting describes the time, place, and environment of a story and can have a big impact on the characters in the story. Listen for ways that the author describes different settings in *Rachel Carson and Her Book . . .* In each setting, what feelings does Rachel have about the natural and man-made things around her? Look for ways the illustrations also show the settings.
- From when she was a child to becoming an adult, look for skills that Rachel Carson developed. Which of them helped her to write *Silent Spring*?

AFTER READING

- Think about the last few pages of the book and the epilogue page. What types of people were unhappy about *Silent Spring*? Why would they be unhappy?

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For more information, visit the National Museum of American History website <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/environment>.

Rachel Carson's love of nature started when she was a young girl. Beyond her mother's love of nature, Rachel's frequent trip outdoors were also motivated by a nature-study movement in the early 1900s, with books and articles advising parents to help children understand nature and want to protect it. Rachel's favorite magazine, *St. Nicholas*, included nature-study articles and illustrations and when she was only ten, Rachel published her first piece of writing in *St. Nicholas*.

In school, Rachel worked very hard and encouraged her classmates to take their studies seriously as well. In addition to top grades, she also worked on and wrote for her school newspaper. Her teachers were important role models who encouraged her to grow up to be a writer or a scientist—and she ended up becoming both!

Although it was very hard for women scientists to publish their writing in the 1930s and 1940s, Rachel's scientific research and storytelling skills helped her become well known for books and articles about the oceans. But in the late 1950s, Rachel felt that she needed to share the newest science about how widespread use of man-made pesticides hurt the environment. She did a lot of research in libraries, wrote to other experts on the topic, and spoke to other authors to get ideas on the best way to share her research. In 1962



Portrait of Rachel Carson
[Acc. 90-105 - Science Service Records,
1920s-1970s, Smithsonian Institution Archives]

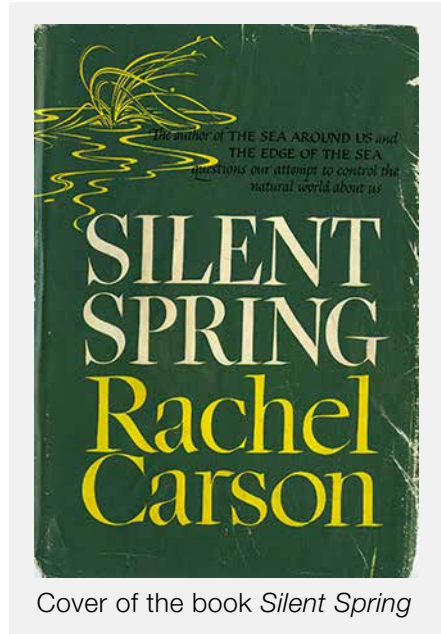
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she published the book *Silent Spring*, which brought a lot of attention to pesticides and other ways that people change the environment.

Some people think that the modern environmental movement might not have started without *Silent Spring*'s wake-up call. Today, the environmental movement has made great changes in the ways everyday people, companies, and governments think about balancing the needs of people with nature's needs. Some topics that environmentalists today think are important include: how people change the places animals live, what chemicals people put in the air or water, and how people make and use energy. What environmental topic is most important to you?



Cover of the book *Silent Spring*

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See the “Reading Guide” sheets for specific reading tips.

OBJECTIVES

The students will be better able to:

- Read for understanding.
- Describe Rachel Carson, her accomplishments, and her place in history.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- Discussion exhibits understanding of story and historical details.
- Discussion exhibits understanding of vocabulary in the context of the story.

STANDARDS

NCHS History Standards

K-4 Historical Thinking Standards

- 3C: Analyze historical fiction.
- 3F: Analyze illustrations in historical stories.

K-4 History Content Standards

- 4C: The student understands historic figures who have exemplified values and principles of American democracy.

IRA/NCTE Language Arts Standards

1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

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21st-Century Skills

Information, Media, and Technology Skills

Information Literacy

Media Literacy

AAAS Science Benchmarks

Grade 3-5 Benchmarks

5-D-3: Organisms interact with one another in various ways besides providing food.

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