

Young Children's Spirituality

This page was created by several PEACE members in collaboration with members of the NAEYC Young Children's Spirituality Interest Forum.

A Child's Garden of Yoga (1980) by Baba Hari Dass

A book of Yoga poses with directions illustrated by children. There are especially nice group poses toward the back.

A Little Peace (2007) by Barbara Kerley

This National Geographic Children's book shows photographs from around the world accompanied by poetic text showing how each person can work to achieve peace.

A Place Where Sunflowers Grow (2006) by Amy Lee-Tai

Written in English and Japanese. This is Mari's story of how she was able to find beauty and hope in a Japanese Internment camp in Utah during the second world war.

A Rainbow of Friends (1994) by P.K. Hallinan

In simple rhymes, the book celebrates the differences in people that make each of us special. The message of world harmony and universal acceptance is strong.

All I see is Part of Me (1994) by Chara M. Curtis

The author of this beautifully written book tells the story by speaking of things that children's see every day: trees, plants, animals, and people. The book conveys innocence and wonder conveying to the child that "Your body is just a little part of the light that shines within your heart."

All in a Day (1999, 1986) Mitsumasa Anno.

From Publishers Weekly: "Ten international artists, including Raymond Briggs, Nicolai Ye Popov, Akiko Hayashi, Eric Carle and Leo and Diane Dillon, show children in different parts of the world over the course of the same day."

All of You was Singing (1995) by Richard Lewis. Illustrated by Ed Young

This is a beautifully illustrated poetic rendering of the Aztec myth about how music came to the earth. The story relates how the sky sends the wind to steal music away from the sun, and how music brings the breath of life to silence.

Amazing Grace (1991) by Mary Hoffman

Although classmates say that she cannot play Peter Pan in the school play because she is black and a girl, Grace discovers that she can do anything she sets her mind to do.

Amelia's Road(1993) by Linda Jacobs Altman & Enrique O. Sanchez

Amelia's family are farm workers who move from crop to crop. But she dreams about a place where she belongs, somewhere that's hers, that she can come back to.

Ancient Rhymes by John Denver

The idyllic ocean environment that welcomes the baby dolphin at its birth has mystical connections to the natural world as a whole. The page layout and visual images are striking. Readers will probably want to play the CD that accompanies the hardcover edition while viewing the pictures. Without music, the text seems convoluted and cloying at times and wouldn't be easy to read aloud. Purchase as needed to satisfy requests from Denver fans

Because Nothing Looks Like God (2000) by Lawrence Kushner

This book addresses the kind of religious questions children often have but are unable to put into words. Through illustrations and text related to common life experiences, God is integrated into the world of children.

Bread, Bread, Bread (1989) by Ann Morris

This delicious book begins with, "People eat bread all over the world." Then the book proceeds to show, through photos of children and families eating and making bread, all the kinds of bread people eat around the world.

Chicken Sunday (1992) by Patricia Polacco

A wonderful intergenerational story about love, courage, and Pysanky eggs. This author has written many books about relationships between children and adults. Other recommendations are I Can Hear The Sun and Mrs.Katz and Tush

Children Just Like Me (1995) A unique celebration of children around the world. In association with United Nations Children's Fund. Barnabas & Anabel Kindersley

Circle Round, Raising Children In Goddess Traditions (1998) by StarHawk, Diane Baker, Anne Hill – Many stories, activities, recipes and songs for children and families following the cycles of the Moon and the Wheel of the Year.

The Circle of Days, from Canticle of the Sun by Saint Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) Reeve Lindbergh (1998) Illustrated by Cathie Felstead

The Dandelion Seed (1997) by Joseph Anthony

A dandelion can teach much about seeds and seasons and cycles, and the big world that a wind-blown seed can travel, but it also can make us appreciate the challenges it must overcome. This gorgeous book is at once simple and profound. You may be surprised and pleased by the questions and observations of your children after reading

Dawn (1974) Uri Shulevitz

"Beginning with the first hint of dawn, each subtle change of atmosphere and color is recorded in a series of stunning and poetic illustrations. A boy and his grandfather awaken and row out in their boat just as the dawn breaks dramatically over the mountain-- with such realism of color and light that the reader almost feels his pupils narrow as the light increases. An artistic tour de force of accuracy and sensitivity."--Parents Magazine

The Earth and I (2008) Frank Asch

This book is a softly illustrated and simple story about a boy who spends time with his special “friend,” the Earth. The child lives in close harmony with nature, and when he sees that the Earth is sad from being polluted, he cleans up the garbage, plants flowers and hugs a tree.

The Earth is Good - A chant in Praise of Nature (1999) by Michael DeMunn

This chant teaches children to appreciate our earth and all its gifts. Children, too, are celebrated as earth’s treasures.

The Empty Pot (1990) by DEMI

This is a beautiful book with a wonderful lesson. It is true to the Chinese tradition of story-telling to help educate. In a warm embracing tone, the book moves the reader to understand the importance of truth and honesty in everyday living.

Faith (2009). Maya Ajmera, Magda Nakassis, Cynthia Pon. A Global Fund for Children Book.

“Faith explores through full-color photographs the many ways in which the world celebrates and practices religious belief, highlighting the common threads—praying and meditating, chants and songs, holy books, cleansing, holy places, holidays and festivals, important events, dress, food and drink, and helping others.” School Library Journal.

Follow the Drinking Gourd (1998) by Jeanette Winter

This is an inspiring story of courage and triumph over adversity. The story is about a slave named Peg Leg Joe who leads other slaves to freedom by teaching them a song instructing them to “Follow the Drinking Gourd”- the Big Dipper during the Underground Railroad.

For Every Child - The UN Convention on the rights of the child in words and pictures (2000) from UNICEF

Fourteen of the most pertinent rights have been chosen and retold in simple text that can be understood by every child. Each right has been interpreted by some of the world’s most acclaimed artists with a forward by Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Friends (1982) by Helme Heine

Charlie Rooster steered, Johnny Mouse and Percy Pig pushed the pedals, and these three friends rode their bike everywhere on adventures each day. Even when their different sleeping needs prevented them from spending the night in one place, they figured out a way to “stick together.”

Everybody Needs a Rock (1974) by Byrd Baylor

Rocks are as individual as people, and this book guides you to find just the right rock for you...because only you can find that just-right rock to hold.

14 Cows For America (2009) by Carmen Agra Deedy

The story of this gift to the American people after the tragedy of 9/11 starts in a far away African village where the American diplomat receives a most extraordinary gift for the American people from the people of the village who understand the true meaning of compassion.

Giving Thanks (1997) by Chief Jake Swamp

This simple and beautifully illustrated book draws on an Iroquis traditional good morning message. The text gives thanks to Mother Earth, and the natural world and “to the Spirit Protectors . . . for showing us ways to live in peace and harmony. . .”

God’s Paintbrush (2004) (10th. Anniversary Ed.) by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso

Using thought provoking queries, this book invites children of all faiths and backgrounds to encounter God through moments in their own lives.

Grandmother’s Dreamcatcher (1998) by Becky Ray McCain and Stacey Scheutt

A young girl cannot sleep because of bad dreams during a stay with her Chippeaw grandmother. Grandmother comforts her by telling the story of the dreamcatcher. They spend a day gathering natural materials and together create a dreamcatcher that only allows gentle dreams come to the child.

The Great Blueness and other Predicaments (1968) by Arnold Lobel

Colors brighten the world, and the story in this book tells that we need all the colors to make the world a beautiful place.

The Great Kapok Tree: A Tale of the Amazon Rainforest (2000) by Lynn Cherry

This myth-like story tells about a man who intends to chop down a great kapok tree, but is lulled to sleep by the “heat and hum” of the rainforest. As he sleeps all the animals that depend upon the tree come to plead with him to spare their home. A child from the Yanomamo tribe whispers in his ear that “all living things depend on one another.”

Half A World Away (1988) by Arlette Lavie

In a land of plenty children become aware of hunger elsewhere on the planet. They work with their parents to do something about it. This is a wonderful book of hope.

The Hearts of Heroes - Young Nevada County Responds to September 11 (2002) is a project of Nevada County Peace Camp & The Community Network for Children and Families.

In this local publication children individually or collaboratively acted with courage, perseverance and optimism to make a difference in the wake of the 9-11 Tragedy. A biography of the participant and his/her/their project demonstrates the heartfelt caring they experienced.

I Celebrate Nature (1993) by Diane Iverson

This book offers a delightful way of sharing precious first experiences with nature with the next generation. The rhyming storyline portray a group of children in a

variety of settings and seasons as they learn the importance of caring for their animal friends.

I'm in Charge of Celebrations (1986, 1995) Byrd Baylor. Illustrated by Peter Parnall. "Baylor lives and writes in Arizona, presenting images of the Southwest and an intense connection between the land and the people. Her prose illustrates vividly the value of simplicity, the natural world, and the balance of life within it." Amazon editorial review.

I See a Song (1973) by Eric Carle

"I paint music. I hear color." Watch the violinist create color, shapes, and feelings with his music. He even invites the reader to use imagination to create and see their own song. The book provides a wonderful invitation to listen to some music and see what pictures can be created by the listener.

I'm Thankful for So Many Things (1986) by P.K. Hallinan

It is a perfect introduction to the idea of thankfulness - the sun and moon, flowers and rain drops, family and friends. The book is colorfully illustrated and easy to understand.

The Important Book (1949) Margaret Wise Brown.

Brown makes us think about the essence of everyday entities in new ways by asking a child what is important about everyday things such as a spoon or an apple?

Lifetimes - The beautiful way to explain death to children (1983) by Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen

This book can help a child understand the death of a relative, a friend or a pet happens, or is about to happen, by explaining life and death in a sensitive, caring and beautiful way. Using illustrations from nature the book shares beginnings and endings and the time in between.

Long Live Earth (1993) by Meighan Morrison

This reflective tale, in rhyme, looks at what people have done to our planet – and carries a message of hope for the future.

Loving (1990) by Ann Morris

This photographic journey shows people all around the world expressing their love through holding, helping, feeding, talking, listening, teaching and sharing. Loving is what makes the world go round.

Magical Hands (1989) by Marjorie Barker and Yoshi

William secretly does the morning chores for each of his three good friends on their birthdays, and when his own birthday comes he finds himself rewarded.

Miss Rumphius (1985) by Barbara Cooney

This beautiful and inspiring classic tells the story about the author's great Aunt Alice Rumphius who lived out her dream of traveling to foreign lands and returning to

live by the sea. Encouraged by her grandfather to “make the world more beautiful,” she did so by planting wildflowers year after year.

Miss Tizzy (1998) by Libba Moore Gray

The eccentric Miss Tizzy, a beloved friend to all the children in her neighborhood, needs their help in remaining happy when she is sick in bed.

Mother Earth (1992) by Nancy Luenn

The story tells of the earth, and all the life forms that make up her body. The book encourages us to look around to see what we can do to give back to the planet that gives us life.

Mole Music (2003) by Davis McPhail

This is basically a story of a life well lived. Mole struggles to learn to play the violin and over the passage of years he becomes quite talented and unbeknownst to him, above ground his gift brings great joy and comfort to plants, animals, and even brings peace.

Morning on the Lake (1997) by Jan Bourdeau Waboose

A beautifully illustrated story of a contemporary Ojibway boy and his grandfather spend morning, noon and night in the wilderness. The boy discovers mystical bonds with various animals, trust in his grandfather’s wisdom and experiences the bonds between man and nature.

My Great-Aunt Arizona (1992) by Gloria Houston

This book is both a history of the one-room schoolhouse in our country and the story of a woman who taught and developed lasting relationships with her students and a love of education even beyond their years in her schoolhouse.

Old Turtle (2007) by Douglas Wood. Illustrated by Cheng-Khee Chee

This is a lovely fable beautifully illustrated with watercolors. It tells a tale of ecology and spirituality. The tale begins with all of creation – trees, stones, aunts, sky, fish— begins arguing over who or what God is. Quiet Old Turtle explains “Above all things and within all things... God IS.”

On My Way by Deepak Chopra

With Deepak Chopra’s *On My Way to a Happy Life*, you can do just that! The ideas found inside this book are the the most timeless laws of the universe, presented in the simplest of terms for young children. When kids understand the way the world works from a spiritual point of view, it makes it easier for them to navigate through it with joy and love and happiness.

The Other Way to Listen (1997) by Byrd Baylor

After hoping and trying, the narrator is finally able to hear the hills singing. The illustrations depict the people and landscapes in strong lines and simple color which portray the Desert People and their environment.

Our Big Home: An Earth Poem (2002) by Linda Glaser. Illustrated by Elisa Kleven
This is a beautifully illustrated celebration of the air, water, soil, sky, sun and rain that we all share. The illustrator conveys joy in our ecological interdependence depicting children and adults enjoying nature all over the world.

Our Grandparents, A Global Album. (2010) Maya Ajmera, Sheila Kinkade, Cynthia Pon. With a foreword by Archbishop Desmond Tutu that describes the importance of the grandparent-grandchild relationship for both. A Global Fund for Children Book. "... describes how grandparents behave: they love their grandchildren, play and laugh, tell good stories, share stories about their past. ... a group of engaging photographs that clearly reveal the wonderful diversity of cultures found both in the USA, and other countries.." Amazon review.

The Other Way To Listen (1997) by Byrd Baylor

This is a tale of truly listening to the world around us. A young boy is eager to learn and an old man is happy to share his wisdom.

Owen ana Mzee, the true story of a remarkable friendship (2006) by Isabella Hatkoff, Craig Hatkoff, and Dr. Paula Kahumbu

Can a baby hippo and a 150 year old tortoise be friends? After the tsunami in Malaysia several years ago a baby hippo was separated from his family. The loner tortoise accepted the baby as his own, and some photographers tell the friendship story.

Owl Moon (1987) Jane Yolk, Illustrated by John Schoenherr.

"As expansive as the broad sweep of the great owl's wings and as close and comforting as a small hand held on a wintry night . . . The visual images have a sense of depth and seem to invite readers into this special nighttime world."--School Library Journal. 1988 Caldecott Medal Book.

Pablo Remembers, the Fiesta of the Day of the Dead (1993) by George Ancona

Pablo lives in the Mexican city of Oaxaca. His journey to get ready to celebrate the Day of the Dead with his family is presented in exquisite photographs. Everything about this holiday is explained clearly and lovingly.

The Paper Princess (1994) by Elisa Kleven

A young girl makes a princess out of paper. The wind comes along and carries the paper princess away. She experiences many adventures and some kindness and comes back home again.

The Peace Book (2004) by Todd Paar

Simply written for very young children. Ways to find peace on the inside and the outside.

Peace in Our Lifetime, Insights from the World's Peacemakers (2004) by Susan Skog

This is a book for young adults and older adults bringing together ideas from many peacemakers around the world about how to develop peace.

People (1988, 1980). Written and illustrated by Peter Spier.

"A wonderful introduction to a global view that will answer and arouse curiosity in the young and act as an absorbing reminder for any age." -- School Library Journal.

Play with Me (1976) by Maria Hall Ets, author and illustrator

This lovely classic tells a tale about a little girl who goes to a meadow to play, but initially scares away all the animals she wants to play with – until she learns to sit quietly and patiently and be appreciative of their presence when they come near.

The Sea and I (1990) by Harutaka Nakawaatri

Beautiful illustrations tell the story of both a boy's love of the sea and his dad, who is a fisherman.

Sister Anne's Hands (2000) by Marybeth Lorriecki

Seven year old Anna has her first encounter with racism in the 1960's when an African-American nun comes to teach at her parochial school. Sister Anne's wise way of turning a painful incident into a powerful learning experience has profound impact upon Anna and her classmates.

Somewhere Today: A Book of Peace (1998) by Moore Thomas and Eric Futran

A wonderful book illustrated with full-color photographs of children and adults, all over the world, who are helping one another and bringing about peace.

Sophie's Masterpiece (2004) by Eileen Spinelli

Sophie is a spinning artist, but, as a spider, she finds it hard to locate a place where she is welcome. Finally she finds a home and caringly creates her masterpiece.

The Story of the Jumping Mouse (1989) by John Lewis Steptoe

An African American tale of courage. Magic Frog encourages Jumping Mouse to attempt a long journey. Mouse faces many obstacles but his compassion and faith in himself prove to be a source of great power along his travels to the "wonderful land of legend."

The Table Where Rich People Sit (1994) by Byrd Baylor

The clash of child-parent priorities is faced with honesty, and the difference between a freely-chosen simple lifestyle and real poverty is skillfully delineated.

Talking to the Sun. An Illustrated Anthology of Poems for Young People. Selected and introduced by Kenneth Koch and Kate Farrell. (1985)

"Poems from various time periods and many countries are organized by theme and illustrated with reproductions from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York."

The Tenth Good Thing About Barney (1987,1971) Judith Viorst, Illustrated by Erik Blegvad

From the Publisher: "My cat Barney died this Friday. I was very sad. My mother said we could have a funeral for him, and I should think of ten good things about Barney

so I could tell them.... But the small boy who loved Barney can only think of nine. Later, while talking with his father he discovers the tenth -- and begins to understand."

That's What Friends are For (1968) by Florence Heide & Sylvia Vorth Van Clief
To give advice is very nice, but friends can do much more. Friends should always help a friend. What's what friends are for!

This Land is Your Land, with a Tribute to Peet Seeger. Words and Music by Woody Guthrie (© renewed 1956). Paintings by Kathy Jakobsen (1998)

The Tortilla Factory (1995) by Gary Paulsen
The beautiful illustrations and simple words tell the story of all the hands and care that bring a tortilla to your table.

This Little Light of Mine (2005) illus. by E.B. Lewis
Using the text of the African-American spiritualist, this illustrated version depicts the phrases of the song in sensitive, joyful portrayals of African-American family and community life.

The Three Questions, Based on a story by Leo Tolstoy (2002) by Jon Muth
The author's simple and eloquent text has a gentle message of compassion and living for each moment. The boy had three important questions: When is the best time to do things? Who is the most important one? What is the right thing to do? Answers come.

To Every Thing There is a Season. Verses from Ecclesiastes. Illustrations by Leo & Diane Dillon (1998).
The famous verses from the Book of Ecclesiastes are accompanied by exquisite illustrations, each rendered in the style of a different world culture...An ecumenical, artistic, and cultural experience, rich in beauty and expansive in its appreciation of ethnic variety." - School Library Journal

The Tree in the Ancient Forest (1995) by Carol Reed-Jones. Illustrated by Christopher Canyon
This beautifully illustrated book gives children an understanding of forest ecology. The author uses the poetic technique of repetitive, cumulative verse to describe the cycle of interdependence between plants and animals.

Turn! Turn! Turn! (2003) adapted by Pete Seeger
The book takes a song, based upon Bible verse Ecclesiastes 3, which proclaims that there is a season for everything and creates an illustrated version of the Bible verse turned song.

Voices on the Wind, Poems for All Seasons (1990) Selected by David Booth,
Illustrated by Michele Lemieux

The Way to Start a Day (1977) by Byrd Baylor

This book for children shows how so many different peoples and cultures (from American Indians to African tribes to ancient Egyptians) have greeted the rising Sun with songs and praise.

What Does Peace Feel Like? by V. Radunsky

As much a celebration of the five senses as an antiwar message, this bright picture book combines Radunsky's playful gouache double-page scenarios with quotes from grade-schoolers at an international school in Rome. What does Peace look like?

"Like something beautiful that goes away but will come back," reads the text, which is accompanied by illustrations showing a cat and a dog curled up together in a big basket. Peace sounds like "raindrops falling . . . like voices singing." Peace tastes like ice cream, in many flavors. A great last page shows the word for peace in nearly 200 languages, from Abenaki and Afrikaans to Zapotec and Zulu.

What is God by Etan Boretzer

is an eloquent introduction to the ideas behind God and religion, and brings forward complex ideas in a way children will understand. It is written with a simple clarity and beautifully illustrated with just the right blend of seriousness and humor. It compares different religions -- Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism -- and their holy books, looks at misunderstandings and arguments among people of different religions, and talks about praying as well as feeling connected to everything in the world.

Winter Poems (1994) Selected by Barbara Rogasky. Illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman

The World's Birthday (1990) by Barbara Diamond Goldin

Daniel loved Rosh Hashanah, the world's birthday. He decides to make a birthday party. "you can't have a party for the world. It's much too big to fit in the house" says his sister. But with a little help from Grandpa and the local baker, he comes up with a wonderful idea.