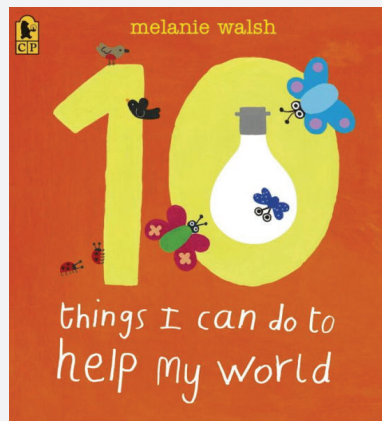


First Opinion: 10 Things I Can Do to Help My World

Walsh, Melanie. *10 Things I Can Do to Help My World*.
Atheneum, 2018.

Kimberly Fredenburg and Kathy Martin



It is never too early to learn about saving our earth, and *10 Things I Can Do to Help My World* by Melanie Walsh is a great resource for teachers. Walsh shows us how the smallest of changes in our habits can have a big impact. Within the book, there are four main topics. The first topic is energy and water conservation and suggests activities such as unplugging the TV when not in use, turning off lights when leaving a room, and turning off the water when you are brushing your teeth. The second topic is about pollution and air quality. The author/illustrator shows children walking to school instead of being driven, planting seeds to circulate oxygen and filter out carbon dioxide, and throwing trash away. The third topic is about taking care of animals, such as feeding birds during the winter months. “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle”—a common conservation phrase is the last topic Walsh addresses. She suggests reducing our use of paper by writing and drawing on both sides, reusing boxes to create new objects to use as toys, and recycling our trash.

10 Things I Can Do to Help My World is crafted in large simple drawings and bold colors to capture the attention and engage young children. Walsh keeps her focus on clear, concrete things children can do by using the power of first person to help children see what they can do to help their world and empowering them and increasing their motivation to act on behalf of the earth. For example; on the third page spread Walsh shows a sink with the faucet running. The text shows the child saying, “I try . . . to turn off the tap when I brush my teeth,” while on the next page spread there is a second voice of an affirming adult who says, “Every time you do this, you save eighteen glasses of water.”

A page spread that shows many different sizes and colors of boxes is another example of how Walsh draws the children, her audience, into the character's world. The child says, "I enjoy . . . making toys from things around the house," while the adult voice says, "We can reuse lots of things before we throw them away." The presence of both the first person primary text (the child's voice telling what he/she/they does to help his/her/their world, in conjunction with the secondary text (the voice of an adult, affirming the child's earth-friendly actions and explaining how this helps our world) mirror familiar adult-child interactions in which children learn from a loving adult.

Walsh sets up a pattern of illustration which she uses throughout the book. One part of this pattern is the use of flaps which children manipulate to turn the pages. This simple artistic technique engages children as they anticipate and discuss the shape of each flap and its significance to the rest of the illustration. Both the background colors and the smaller secondary parts of the illustrations complement the larger, main illustrations. One example of this is the first page spread where the background is black outside the range of the lightbulb, while within the range of the light bulb the insects are illustrated with bright, primary colors. The green background on another page spread represents the grass, but trash is littering the area. On the next page spread, the trash is in the garbage can, and there are contrasting yellow and white flowers, representing a clean, fresh-smelling area of grass without litter. On both page spreads of the winter scene, the dark brown trees contrast with the bright white snow to form a frame around the birds and the recycled items are used to make toys. The textures created the illustrations, along with the cutout flap offer a 3-D effect. Lastly, the end page has a black night sky with white stars to contrast the bright blue and green earth.

Besides using this as a classroom read-aloud, *10 Things I Can Do to Help My World* has the potential for dramatic performance. Young children absolutely love it! Given the structure of the text, alternating individual children could read the first phrase of the primary text, with the entire class finishing the child-spoken phrase. Then the teacher would finish by reading the secondary text of the affirming adult. For example, on one page a child would read, "I use . . ." and the class would say, "both sides of the paper," followed by the teacher reading, "If everybody did this, it would greatly reduce the number of trees we use to make paper." *10 Things I Can Do To Help My World* also lends itself to the use of gesture. For example, gestures could be added to enhance the performance and make it more meaningful and enjoyable to perform and to watch. Reading it this way would provide the children with ownership of the text, allowing them to possibly move more readily into action.

Teaching young children that even they can take care of the world is an important task for adults. This book empowers young children. These are easy things they can do with little help from adults. Just think of the impact on our earth if every child did these ten things!

Works Cited

Walsh, Melanie. *10 Things I Can Do to Help My World*. Atheneum, 2018.