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Sustainable Stories: Linking Graphic Design and the Environment to Inform, Educate, and Inspire

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**Sustainable Stories: Linking
Graphic Design and the
Environment to Inform, Educate,
and Inspire**



Honors Thesis

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Department of Art and Design

Misty Thomas-Trout, MFA

April 2021

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Abstract

The importance of the field of graphic design lies in its ability to communicate with others. It can serve to transcend barriers, to clarify messages, and to deepen universal understanding. Similarly, sustainability encompasses the three spheres of the environment, society and economy—demonstrating its interconnected complexities and multifaceted applications. In pursuing my Honors Thesis, I aimed to develop a project which would reflect the ideals of sustainability while simultaneously serving to educate about the importance of caring for the natural world. Furthermore, my research explores how the disciplines of sustainability and design overlap and interact, searching to discover ways in which they may be linked for the purpose of education and inspiration. The medium of a children’s book introduced me to one creative avenue for combining the fields and realizing this aspiration.

Disclaimer

This Honors Thesis builds upon research conducted at the Berry Summer Thesis Institute during the Summer of 2019. Portions of the text, images, and figures were previously published in the 2019 Berry Summer Thesis Institute Proceedings and appear reprinted here to serve in the continuation of this research.

Dedication and Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the many people who have supported me throughout the creation and development of my Honors Thesis. Thank you to the Berry Family, Berry Family Foundation, and Berry Summer Thesis Institute Cohort for the opportunity to begin my research alongside a group of intelligent and passionate people. Thank you to the University of Dayton, University of Dayton Honors Program, and Honors Program Staff for supporting research, scholarship, and creativity. A special thanks to my Thesis advisor, Professor Misty Thomas-Trout, for her trust in me and guidance over the past two years. Thank you to the University of Dayton Library staff, the Bombeck Center, River’s Edge Montessori, and the Dayton Metro Public Library for helping me share this book with a wider audience. I would additionally like to express my gratitude for the professors, friends, and family who have contributed to the shaping and reshaping of my Thesis and who continue to inspire me to endeavor to make the world a better place.

This Honors Thesis is dedicated to every creature, known and yet unknown, and to the connections that link us all, providing the capacity for care and compassion.



University of
Dayton

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Introduction

Graphic designers have the capacity and the responsibility to visually communicate messages to audiences. My role as a visual communicator is to deliver clear messages while also addressing the importance of sustainability. The salient nature of the topic of sustainability makes it applicable to audiences both young and old, giving it the versatility to cross and connect disciplines. This quality further emphasizes the importance that action be taken quickly and collectively to ensure the preservation of our planet. As the fields of design and sustainability have continued to grow, the potential for creative solutions has also expanded—offering opportunities for linking the disciplines to each other and providing hope for a better world. As designers and authors Eric Benson and Yvette Perullo note: “It’s not about doing less bad, it’s not about achieving a net zero impact, but it’s about actually making the world a better place.”¹ Design is an avenue for affecting this type of identifiable, lasting, and positive change.

Sustainability

Defining what is meant by the term sustainability proves no simple task as it is influenced by a variety of factors such as culture, environment, society, economy, location, privilege, and more. In this way, the definition of sustainability is constantly shifting, dependent on which individual you ask and at what time. A report published in 1987 by the Brundtland Commission entitled *Our Common Future* defined sustainability as: “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”² In other words, sustainability should be approached as thinking about the future. As authors of *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things* William McDonough and Michael Braungart describe, it’s

questioning— “how can one design or manufacture in a way that loves all children, of all species, for all time?”³ These definitions illustrate that sustainability encompasses more than environmental conscientiousness. There are three pillars which must be functioning together in order for sustainability to be achieved: the environmental, economic, and social. Each pillar plays a role in maintaining the balance between the complex web of systems that make up our world. My research has communicated to me the integral importance of these interdependent and connected relationships, further emphasizing the impact that individual actions can have on the sustainability of the whole system (our Earth).

The more I learn about sustainability, the more I reflect on how my role and responsibility as a designer can contribute to a more sustainable future. The design industry can be incredibly wasteful; designers print on a lot of paper, contribute to the multitudes of packaging waste that can be found in our landfills, and are responsible, in part, for the vast quantities of carbon entering our atmosphere. Benson and Perullo’s book, *Design to Renourish: Sustainable Graphic Design in Practice*, further acknowledges that, “Graphic Designers are complicit in an industry that creates literal mountains of waste, contributes to the destruction of natural habitats, and poisons waterways and the atmosphere.”¹ Despite this, as Benson and Perullo similarly express, Graphic Design is an immensely powerful tool for disseminating information and inspiring change. More and more designers have been developing ways to be environmentally aware—selecting sustainable materials and thinking more creatively about how to address clients’ design needs. These designers are willing to put forth

the extra effort required to implement a sustainable design practice and are cognizant of the ways that their design decisions affect the world around them. In his book, *A Sand County Almanac, and Sketches Here and There*, naturalist and writer Aldo Leopold states that “a conservationist is one who is humbly aware that with each stroke he is writing his signature on the face of his land.”⁴ My research has taught me that designers, and indeed all people, must learn to think in this way.

Inspirations

In deciding what form my thesis project would take, I thought about what first inspired my own passion and commitment to sustainability and the environment. The answer was in the pages of a children’s book and the image of a watercolor manatee named Ana Lee. I read Rich Bray’s book, *Ana Lee the Manatee*, at the age of six and have loved the manatee and its underwater world ever since.⁵ Julia Matteson’s watercolor illustrations captivated my imagination and sparked my desire to protect the creatures of the planet so that future generations could fall in love with the manatee the same way that I had. After having experienced first-hand the way that a children’s book could inspire a lifetime of dedication to a specific cause, I knew that I wanted to pursue writing and illustrating one of my own. This book would serve to help deepen my understanding of both sustainability and design, would provide me the ability to discover more about the ways that the two disciplines overlap, and would contribute to the growing conversation about the necessity of connecting children to nature. I wanted to do my part in ensuring that the bond between children and nature continued to be cultivated, celebrated, and preserved.

Gathering Information

In preparation for writing, illustrating, and designing my own book, I collected and read a variety of books which covered topics including sustainable graphic design, environmental art, and environmental education. The books built on my foundational knowledge of design and sustainability and further inspired the direction of my book. They offered new ways of thinking that stressed the importance of considering the consequences of actions and choices before setting out to consume or create, even if these activities began with the best of intentions. As Brian Dougherty, author of *Green Graphic Design* describes, “in order to design for change, we need to change the way we design.”⁶ In addition, I also gathered a selection of children’s books focusing on nature and environmental themes to get a sense of how the authors illustrated and constructed interesting and informative narratives. I immersed myself in the wonder, imagination, and whimsy of these author’s tales, taking note of the ways that they spoke to me so that I could endeavor to apply these same ideas within my book. The following is a selection of some of the books from my research that I found to be most useful in shaping my own sustainable story.

***Design to Renourish: Sustainable Graphic Design in Practice*¹**

Benson and Perullo’s book, *Design to Renourish: Sustainable Graphic Design in Practice*¹, aimed to serve as a case study for a method of producing a completely sustainable book. Unfortunately, they experienced challenges in production which prevented them from being able to accomplish this undertaking to their fullest

aspirations. Their experience evidences the difficulties that often arise when trying to design and print sustainably. Their failure does not suggest, however, that sustainable design *can't* or *shouldn't* be done. Rather, they emphasize how their own experience demonstrates exactly why designers should be striving to challenge industry standards. The latter portion of the book provides examples of studios and projects which pursue sustainable methods and materials in the creation of their designs. Their eco-innovative designs display how sustainable design alternatives can be both beautiful, cost-effective, and environmentally aware. These themes directly correlate with my own aim of producing a sustainably conscious book and, also, with my desire to establish a sustainable design practice in my career. The book illustrates that there is still a lot of room for improvement and provides me with the inspiration that there are others, like myself, who are willing to try.

***Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*³**

As an architect and chemist, McDonough and Braungart describe their experiences with our climate situation and provide highly innovative potential solutions to the problem in their book, *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*³. When searching for forward-thinking sustainable design, *Cradle to Cradle* is a prime example, often referred to, studied, and developed further by other innovators in the field. The book challenges even what most environmentalists and bio-conscious people consider to be at least steps in the right direction, saying that simply being “less bad” is not good enough.³ Keeping this concept in mind, the authors describe how their book is printed on paper made out of recycled plastic using a method called DuraBook technology. This tree-free “paper”

offers an avenue for reuse of plastic, a material which is known to wreak havoc on both aquatic and terrestrial systems, finding its way into the deepest parts of our oceans and the stomachs of a plethora of living organisms. McDonough and Braungart's insights got me thinking about the materiality of my own book and challenged me to pursue sustainable alternatives to traditional paper.

The Failure of Environmental Education (And How We Can Fix It)⁷

Saylan and Blumstein's book, *The Failure of Environmental Education (And How We Can Fix It)*⁷, focuses on the shortcomings of the environmental education system and also provides suggestions for how to improve upon it. They state that, "students and indeed all citizens, need the capacity to see intangible value in things: forests simply for the sake of forest; the expanse of wilderness simply because it is alive, primal, and fiercely beautiful."⁷ This statement recognizes the innate value of the natural world and contrasts the pervasive anthropocentric viewpoint that tends to measure something's worth based on its usefulness to humans. Some additional points they made which I felt to be significant and applicable to my thesis included: the need to bring children out into nature (preventing the current trend of "nature deficit disorder"—a term coined by Richard Louv⁸), being willing to employ creative solutions, encouraging imagination, and taking on individual responsibilities for the climate situation. Encouraging children to have a relationship with nature at a young age heightens their appreciation and respect for living things, reduces their fear of the outdoors, and helps to shape them into adults who understand that their behavior affects the broader community. In writing my book, I aimed to incorporate potential solutions to the problems discussed by Saylan

and Blumstein by creating a more aware and engaged society, starting with its youngest members.

Art & Ecology Now⁹

Brown's book, *Art & Ecology Now⁹*, provides examples of artists who engage with the environment through their art. The book is divided up into three sections and classifications of ecological artists—some who use environmental materials, some who employ environmental themes, and some who encourage protection of the environment (with some artists blending the categories and working within the overlaps). Each artist that he describes has their own unique and specific manner of creating and engaging with the material. The care with which they work, evidences a deep appreciation for their subject and clearly communicates their purposes. This resource was beneficial in exposing me to research which examines the overlap between art and ecology—something that I hope to achieve through the production of my children's book and carry into my future work as a social and environmental designer.

A Sand County Almanac, and Sketches Here and There⁴

Written in 1989, Aldo Leopold's book, *A Sand County Almanac⁴*, is beloved by naturalists and conservationists for its poetic and powerful language calling on its readers to reconnect with the land. Leopold's "land ethic" explains "that land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics,"; he follows up this concept with the idea that "we can only be ethical in relation to something we can see, understand, feel, or otherwise have faith in."⁴ In this way, he

demonstrates that ethics are connected to awareness. It is difficult to care for something that you have never heard of before and even more difficult to feel responsible for its preservation on our planet. Furthermore, this point is particularly relevant because many people are losing the ability to recognize that all things inherently have value, beyond that involving economic matters. We must stop looking at nature and asking what can it do for us. Instead, we must start wondering what might be achieved if we asked what we could do together. These ideas became core components of my children's book, inspiring me to engender interaction between children and the outdoors and to help readers build meaningful relationships with their own natural world.

***The Lost Words: A Spell Book*¹⁰**

A similarly inspiring and influential book, entitled *The Lost Words: A Spell Book*¹⁰ written by Robert MacFarlane and illustrated by Jackie Morris, is a children's book which details and describes 50 words "lost" from the Oxford Junior Dictionary. The book opens, "the words were those that children used to name the natural world around them: acorn, adder, bluebell, bramble, conker—gone...no longer vivid in children's voices, no longer alive in their stories."¹⁰ Information provided on the back of the book further explains that these lost words were replaced in the Oxford Junior Dictionary by technological ones such as blog and email—words which were apparently frequenting children's speech more often than the nature words. I was shocked to learn that words like dandelion and acorn which ranked high on my own childhood linguistic-descriptor list were being outpaced by children's use of words like chatroom and attachment. I could not fathom a child looking at a dandelion and not knowing or caring what it was

called. After reading Macfarlane's book I had a strong sense of the narrative that I wanted to communicate to children—using naming, history, and language as means to reconnect children to outdoor experiences.

Process and Exploration

Materials Research

In developing my project, it was important to me that I made an effort to realize a thesis in which content and context were consistent with the ideals of sustainability—necessitating further research on what sustainable materials could be utilized in my final project. Data from the first graph was retrieved in 2019 when I first began my thesis at the Berry Summer Thesis Institute (Fig. 1). The statistics on these graphs display my individual ecological footprint as a graphic design major since beginning my education at the University of Dayton in 2017. The bottom left of the infographic also describes the organizational environmental impact of the Art and Design Department at the University of Dayton including tree and energy consumption, as well as, carbon emissions. The second graph indicates how my usage has continued to increase throughout my academic career (Fig. 2). Even as a designer who is passionate about creating in a way that minimizes environmental impacts, it is clear that my discipline continues to have measurable effects. Since 2019, the kg of CO₂ that I have produced has increased from 2.9kg to 6.2kg and I have contributed to the consumption of nearly an entire tree (Fig. 1 & Fig. 2).

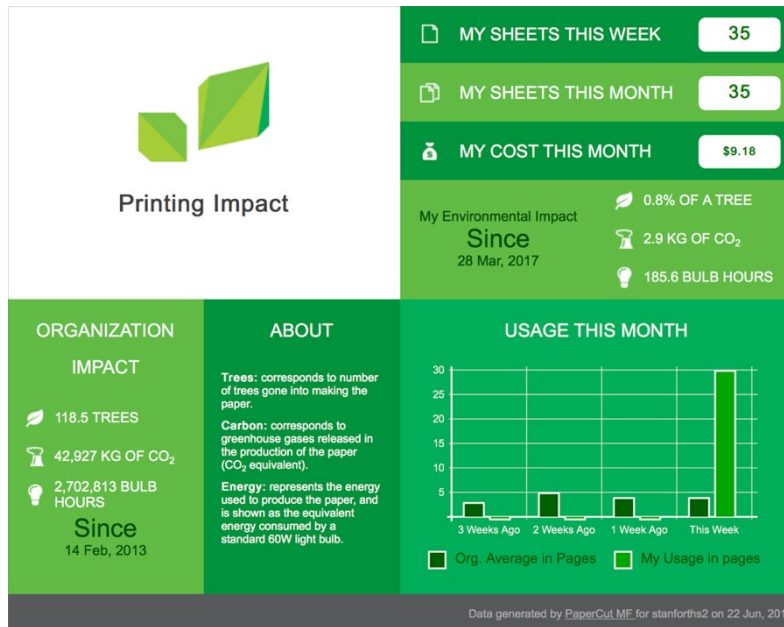


Figure 1: Data retrieved by Shannon Stanforth, 2019.

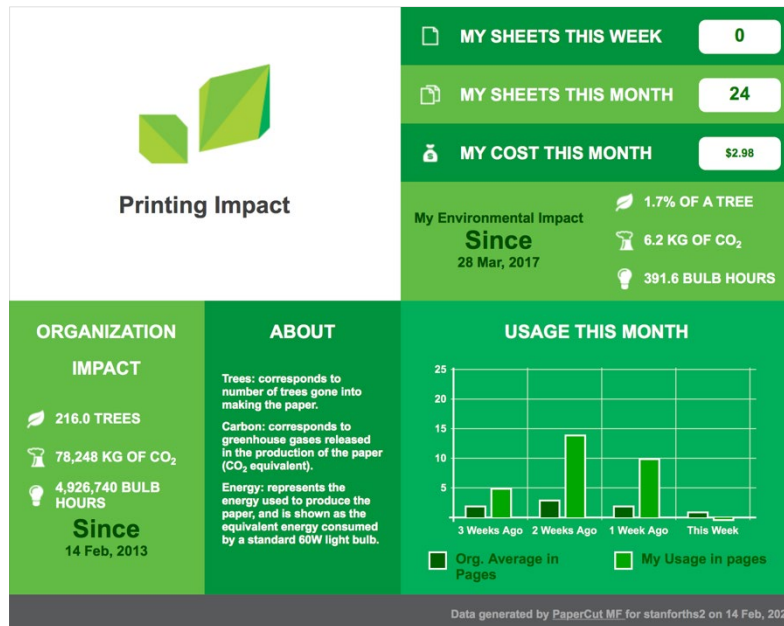


Figure 2: Data retrieved by Shannon Stanforth, 2021.

Jessica Carver and Natalie Guidry, authors of *Rethinking Paper & Ink: The Sustainable Publishing Revolution*, explain that paper production and printing impacts account for 26.6% of the share of carbon emissions, and books in landfills contribute to the release of 8.2% of carbon emissions.¹¹

The ecological costs of printing on paper are evident. For this reason, I began exploring alternative options that would serve to better align the book with its sustainable message. I considered the possibility of implementing the same DuraBook recycled plastic technology that McDonough and Braungart utilized to produce *Cradle to Cradle* for my own book. However, this technology is not widely distributed for individual use and is still in the process of being refined. I also researched tree-free papers such as cotton, bamboo, and sugar cane. These materials exhibit a range in their environmental friendliness. Bamboo, for example, regenerates more quickly than traditional trees. A review of photo papers titled, “Green-in-Print™: A Guide to Environmentally Friendly Choices in Photographic Paper,” by Joe Zammit-Lucia describes the sustainability of cotton paper.¹² The production of cotton paper entails no additional environmental impact as cotton lint is a by-product of textile production. However, this is not to say that the production of cotton paper cannot be made *more* sustainable. Cotton paper that has been produced from crops that are grown without pesticides (organically) and which ensure the fair treatment of cotton growers would represent an even more socially and environmentally responsible paper choice.

Ultimately, I decided that finding a 100% recycled paper source was the most feasible, sustainable design decision for my Thesis project. The final paper selection for my book is 100% post-consumer recycled paper from the Neenah Environment® collection which meets the FSC® standard for responsible forestry and is produced without the use of chlorine. “Post-consumer” indicates that the paper or product has entered the public waste stream and is now at the end of its life cycle, unless it is reclaimed and recycled to be used again.

To ensure the least amount of waste post-production, I ordered specific paper sheet dimensions. This idea is called designing your press-sheet. “Designing a press-sheet, it turns out, is an easy way for graphic designers to get the most out of a print run,” explains Dougherty.⁶ When a designer thinks about how their pages or product will fit onto a piece of paper (their press-sheet) before they start designing, this results in less waste when the paper is trimmed during production. As I continue my career as a designer, searching for sustainable methods of production, including selecting ethically and environmentally sourced materials will remain an ever-present, ever-evolving component of my design process.

Illustrations

I also explored and experimented with ways to sustainably craft my illustrations. My book includes a mixed media illustration approach which incorporates images produced with acrylic paint, colored pencil, and repurposed magazine scraps. Some of the critters and creatures featured in the book are composed of layered hole punches from magazine

pages. The texture of the magazine paper images mimic that of bark, grass, fish scales, and other elements of nature. I wanted to emphasize the magazine details in order to display one way that creativity and sustainability can be linked to provide an alternative design solution.

While paper and materiality are important design decisions, as Dougherty describes, “the messages designers make, the brands we build, and the causes we promote can have impacts far beyond the paper we print on.”⁶ This is where I began to develop my narrative, aiming to clearly convey a story which contributed to the important work of designing for change.

Writing Process

It became clear during the writing process that the core objective was to develop a connection between children and nature. This, I believed, could start simply; introducing children to words and names and associating them with nature images served as the first-step in creating awareness about what existed in the natural world. This awareness could then lead to care and concern. I used the Oxford English Dictionary as a resource to research the etymology of specific species and words like “tree” or “frog”. Discovering their origin allowed me to place their historical significance, connect them to their surroundings, and make them more meaningful to young readers. Furthermore, through reading a number of children’s books as part of my preparatory research, I knew that the books that rhymed were the ones whose messages resonated with me the most. Therefore, I decided to develop a rhyme scheme to be followed as an organizational structure for the

text of the book. I composed a five-line stanza which used the scheme A, B, C, C, B.

For example:

- A Yes, a beautiful flower, indeed.
- B This one brings a date to mind.
- C Flowers were called by this word in the time of 1200.
- C Each one was special and beloved.
- B With its own connection to human-kind.

In this example, “indeed” stands on its own, “mind” rhymes with “kind”, and “1200” rhymes with “beloved”. This rhyme scheme aided me in writing the rest of the book and provided the linguistic foundation for my writing process.

Design Decisions

The design process included the arrangement of spreads, text, and illustrations. Additionally, one of the most important design decisions that I needed to make was which typeface would serve as the primary and accent face for the text of the book. A typeface refers to the shared style, structure, and form of a specific set of letters. I researched and explored typefaces, analyzing them based on criteria such as their sustainability and legibility. Ryman Eco, an environmentally sustainable typeface designed by Dan Rhatigan with Grey London, was selected for the main text of the book. Launched in 2014, the typeface is considered sustainable because it uses 33% less ink in production, cutting down on the amount of material necessary to print the text. Ryman Eco’s letterforms have spaces which, when printed, seem to fill in (Fig. 3). This small, but impactful design choice demonstrates how designing sustainability does not mean compromising the integrity of the design. In fact, some sustainability decisions are nearly

undetectable. I chose the Shannon typeface as the accent typeface for its legibility and readability. It is used to call attention to specific words, adding hierarchy and intrigue to the page and guiding the eye ever-forward in the book. Shannon was designed by Janice Prescott Fishman and Kris Holmes for Compugraphic in 1982.



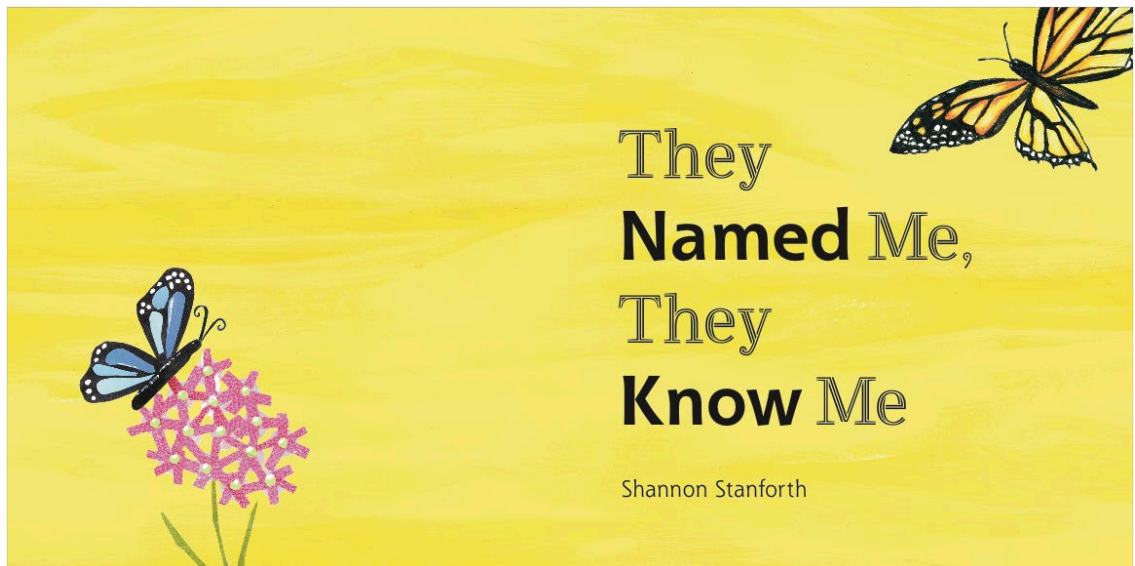
Figure 3: Ryman Eco (left), Shannon (right).

They Named Me, They Know Me

I titled my book, *They Named Me, They Know Me*, in reference to the relationship created between one individual and another through the use of a name. As I have described, naming serves as the first step in building awareness, which eventually leads to respecting and caring. The book is told from the point of view of a tree who has become the pages of the book. The tree begins its tale asking for the reader's participation and interaction, continuing its story by recounting children's relationship with the flowers, the butterflies, the birds, the frogs, and the fish. The tree's cheery tone is darkened when the people forget the creatures, but is brightened by the hope of

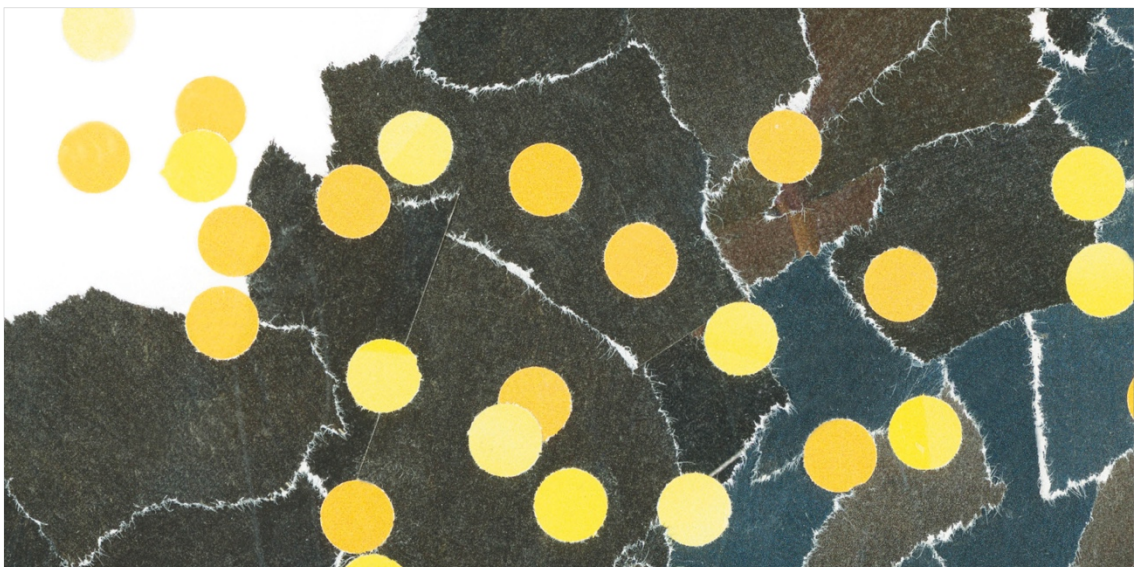
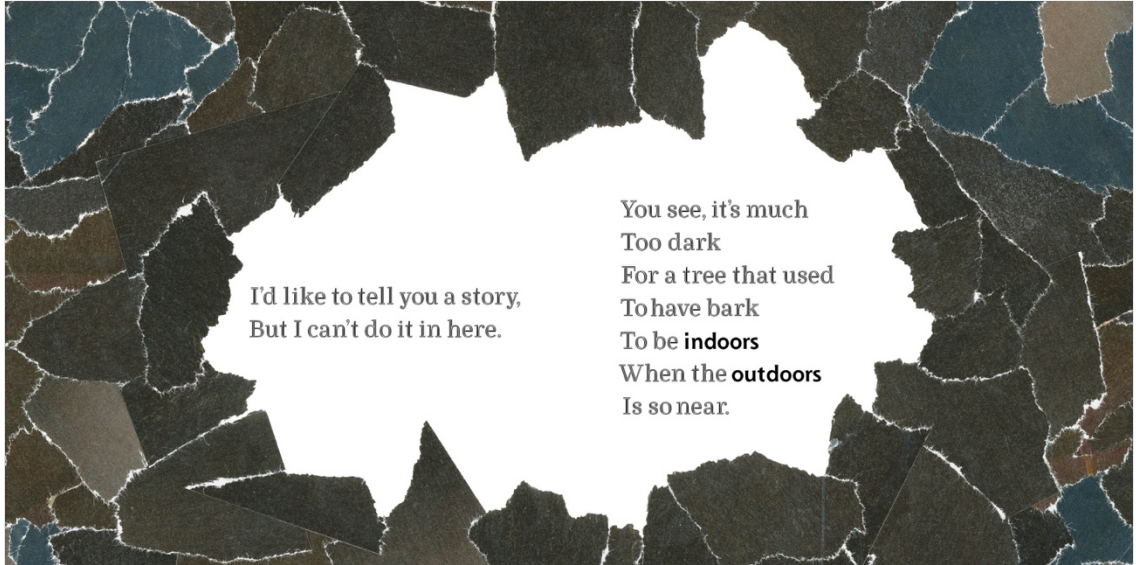
remembrance. *They Named Me, They Know Me* is written, primarily, for a Kindergarten–2nd grade audience. However, its multiple layers of meaning make it engaging for both younger and older audiences. It is my hope that as parents, guardians, and educators read the book with their children, classrooms, or even on their own, they can be reminded of the importance of caring for the natural world and pausing to reflect on the significance of every living being.

Designs and Photographs courtesy of Shannon Stanforth, 2021.



What is **your** name?

This is an **interactive** storybook. Please, play with it, learn with it, explore with it, laugh with it, and make sure there is an adult by your side doing each of these things **with** you!

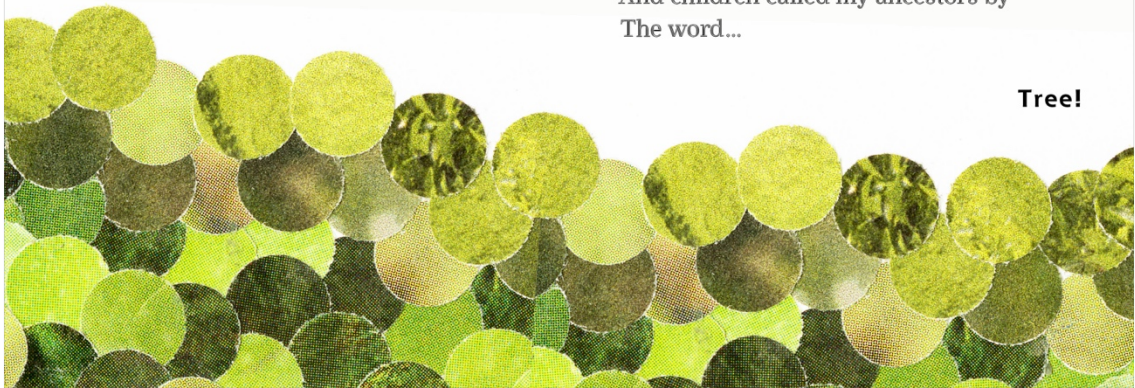




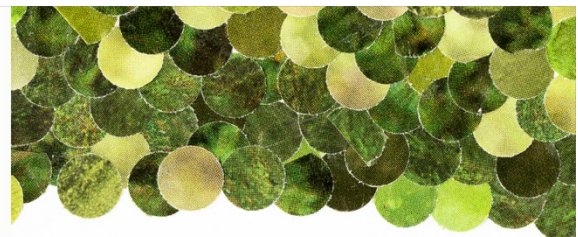
Thank you!
Now, I feel much **better**
And you will hear a tale from me.

It all **begins** back in the time of 825.
That's when the Vikings were all alive
And children called my ancestors by
The word...

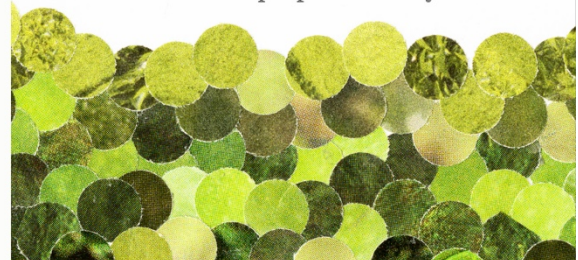
Tree!



These old trees could now say
The children knew their names!
The trees stood tall and proud
With their arm-like branches
Stretched way **up** to the clouds
And the children did the same.



Children were beginning to learn these words
that lots of people use today.





Will you find me a flower please?

Quick! Plant one in my pages,
Place its petals on my letters,

And then I will remember
When children first used the
Word **flower** during the ages.

Wait!

Be sure to find a fallen flower.
Don't pluck it from the ground
Or from the branches of a tree.
That way **others** can still see the
Wonderful flowers all around.

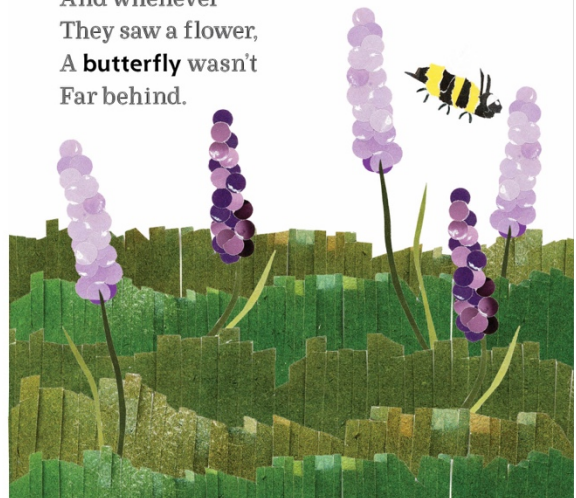


Yes, a **beautiful** flower, indeed.
This one brings a date to mind.
Flowers were called by this word
In the time of 1200.

Each one was **special** and beloved
With its own connection to human-kind.



And whenever
They saw a flower,
A **butterfly** wasn't
Far behind.





100 years later butterflies
Were called by this name.

Floating and flying through the sky
Their fluttering **wings** and bright colors
Set them apart from one another.

How **many** butterflies can you spy?

If you said twelve, then they
should call you eagle-eye!

Butterflies **help** flowers to grow.
So, if you walked around outside,
I am sure you could **spot** a lot.
Maybe they're visiting a milkweed
Or are they by a flower pot?

Just **keep** your
Eyes open wide!



Butterflies were not the only
Flying **friends** that the children
Made back then.



They have their very **own** names
Like cardinal and wren.

In fact, it was in the year 1225
When the children learned the
Word for the feathered beings
That we call **birds**.

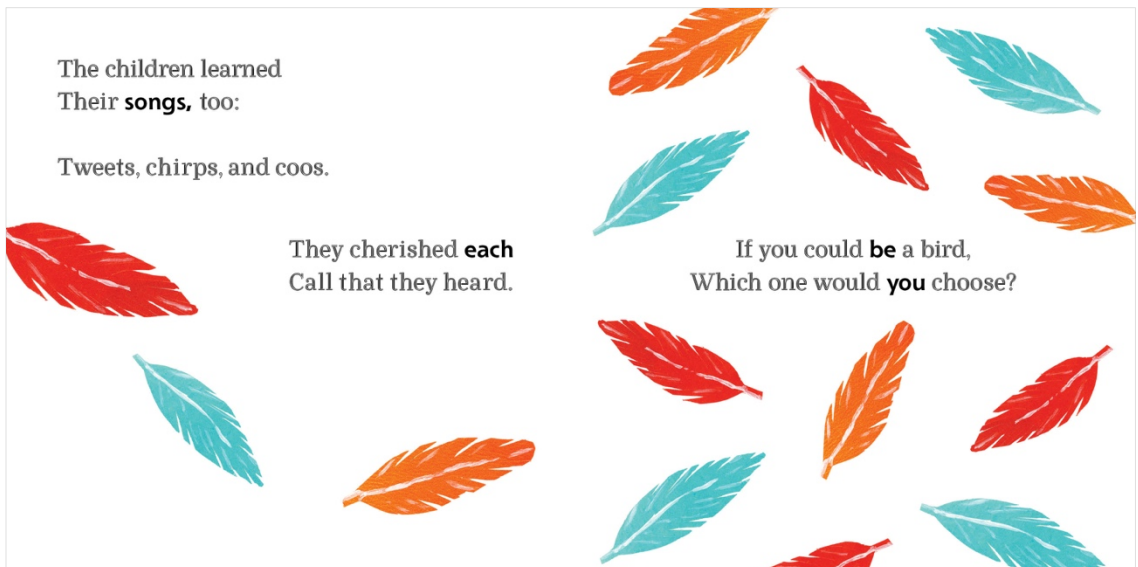


The children learned
Their **songs**, too:

Tweets, chirps, and coos.

They cherished **each**
Call that they heard.

If you could **be** a bird,
Which one would **you** choose?

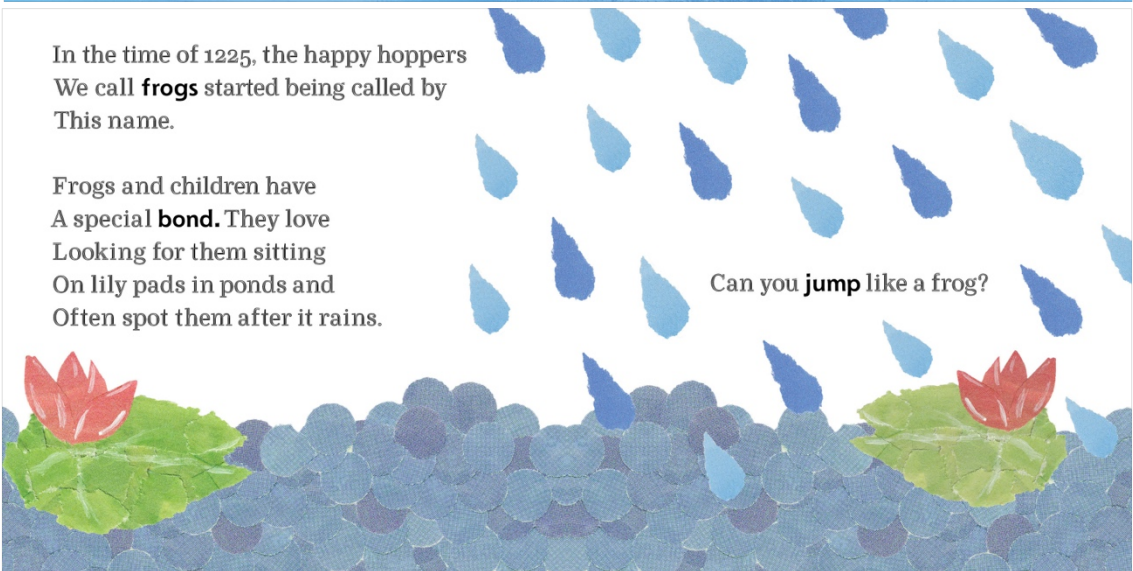




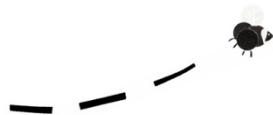
In the time of 1225, the happy hoppers
We call **frogs** started being called by
This name.

Frogs and children have
A special **bond**. They love
Looking for them sitting
On lily pads in ponds and
Often spot them after it rains.

Can you **jump** like a frog?



Wow!



Well, I don't think that jump could
Have been higher and I am sure
That your skill would **inspire** even
The frogs that live in bogs.

What did you say **your** name was again?
Are you sure it isn't frog?



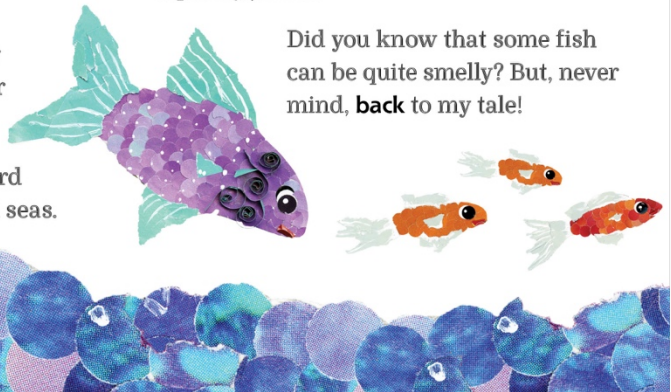


The year was 825—remember those Vikings again. This was the same year That the children learned the word for Trees, with their branches and limbs.

The children also learned the word For **fish** that swim in oceans and seas.

The fish cruised through the waves With their **bright** and glittery scales. They swam past colorful coral and Squishy jellies.

Did you know that some fish can be quite smelly? But, never mind, **back** to my tale!



As I am sure you are starting
To see, every **creature** has a name.
And the more we know,
The easier it is to show
That we care for them all the same.

All the creatures knew that
The children **cared** about them
Enough to learn their names.

But then something **terrible** happened...

Children began to **forget**
Our names. They saw no
Difference between...

Trees and flowers,
Butterflies and birds,
Frogs and fish.

What could I do about this?
They seemed to be forgetting
More and more, every hour.

They turned trees into paper
Like the pages of this book.
They did not smell the flowers
Or hop with frogs after rain showers.
They did **not** even look.

You'll need to find me a sunbeam.
Please, open me up to a band of light.
After I'm warmed by a golden ray,
Then I can **reveal** what I'd like to say

In **words** that
Only a once-wise
Tree can write.



This is the end of my tale.
So, now that you know us
Please don't forget our names.
Because **you** and **we** are
One in the **same**.

Help others
To **remember**—
You have my trust!

Book Making



Photograph courtesy of Shannon Stanforth, 2019.

The final book is constructed in the accordion format which is a playful and interactive form for a children's book. The image above depicts all of the connected spreads, laid out on a tabletop, indicating how the story transitions continuously from one spread to the next. The accordion style book encourages the child to pick up the object, to read it, to take it outside, and to connect with its message. Throughout my research, I have created several copies of the book to improve upon its durability and form. The production and crafting of the physical, printed piece led to the exploration of alternative possibilities for the books dissemination, including digital access.

eBook Accessibility

In an effort to broaden the accessibility of *They Named Me, They Know Me*, I collaborated with staff from the University of Dayton Library to upload the book to

the University of Dayton eCommons website. This format creates a digital eBook that can be flipped through—functioning much in the way that a traditional book would—and can be downloaded internationally. Digital books also have environmental impacts that are worth noting. While eBooks do not require paper, and prevent some of the deforestation that occurs because of the print and publishing industry, it still takes energy to display a digital screen. Combustion of fossil fuels, typically, is what powers this energy. This makes it just as important to consider the environmental effects of reading a book online and producing a book in this format.

Outreach and Engagement

As communication about sustainability and increasing environmental conscientiousness were main objectives of my Thesis project, outreach and engagement were also necessary components to achieving this goal. I attended the Student Sustainability Leaders Conference in Findlay, Ohio in 2019 to speak about my research and earned entrance to present my work at the National Council for Science and the Environment in Washington, D.C. in 2020. The theme of the NCSE conference surrounded scientific communication and bridging the gap that sometimes exists between scientists and the general public. My research about employing design as a tool for communication (to audiences both young and old) similarly aligned with this theme. For me, however, the most meaningful moments of engagement occurred through reading the book to its intended audience: children.

During the process of developing the book, I had the opportunity to read to a class of preschoolers in the local Dayton community. The experience of reading to students at the Bombeck Center was valuable in helping me to make adjustments to the text and narrative. It was, additionally, inspiring for me to see how the children interacted with the questions asked by the book and their recognition of different animals and critters. I had hoped to continue to read to classes in the Dayton Public School system to further disseminate the book and its sustainable message. However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic caused me to reevaluate my plans. I adapted to a digital model, as did much of the globe, and navigated the challenges of screen sharing and zooming with students. In this way, I was able to read *They Named Me, They Know Me* to a class of 1st and 3rd grade students at River's Edge Montessori. To increase the scope of access, I donated a hardcopy of the book to the Dayton Metro Library, Local Author's Collection. Though I would not be able to witness directly the kind of interaction taking place between readers and the book, it was important for me to be able to share it with the community. As life gradually returns to its pre-pandemic state, I hope to arrange more opportunities for reading the book to classrooms and students in the Dayton community and beyond.

Future Studies

Moving forward, I plan to continue exploring ways to incorporate sustainable themes into my graphic design work. During the Berry Summer Thesis Institute in 2019, I developed an additional project in conjunction with my final Thesis book. *A Chance to See Through Different Eyes* is a collection of colored pencil illustrations which represent eight of the most endangered species: Gorilla, Amur Leopard, Tiger, Sumatran Elephant, Orangutan,

Rhino, Sea Turtle, and African Wild Dog (Fig. 4). They act as my own way of looking through the lens of an animal on the brink of extinction and communicating this experience to others. Awareness and advocacy remain central themes within my work and are values I will keep associating within my design creations.



Figure 4: A Chance To See Through Different Eyes. Shannon Stanforth, 2019. Colored Pencil.

As artist and author Elizabeth Mowry explains, “nature presents us with a scientifically beautiful sense of order that, when embraced by creative lyricism and expressed with excellence becomes a powerfully quiet statement about what was, still is, and if we are careful, will be.”¹³ It is my hope that the research I have conducted through my Honors Thesis will contribute to the magnification of this “quiet statement” which involves the melding of art, design, and the environment for all to hear and see.

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