



TEACHING THROUGH BOOKS | PART 2

SUSTAINABILITY

By Rabia Khokhar

THEME: Sustainability

GRADE LEVELS: Middle School
with adaptations for Elementary and High School

LEARNING FOCUS

Through this lesson plan, students will:

- Build love, respect, care, and joy for the environment;
- Learn about role models who have created positive change for the environment;
- Learn about sustainability and consider their own actions in their communities.

Identity: How can we foster our environmental suitability/stewardship identity?

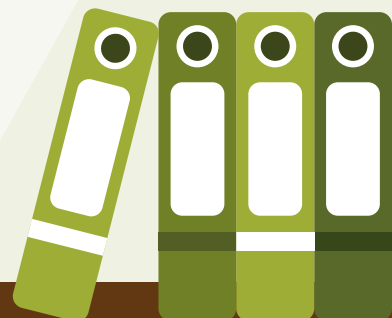
Skills: What skills do we need to learn that will support us as we work to protect the environment?

Intellectualism: How can we see the interconnections between issues of environmental sustainability and other social justice and advocacy issues?

Criticality: How can learning from environmental role models and activists provide us with examples of steps we can take to protect the environment in our own communities?

Joy: How can taking care of the environment spark joy in our lives?

Note that these learning goals follow Gholdy Muhammad's Historically Responsive Literacy Framework, an equity framework for learning. Using this framework, goals are set to ensure that students are making deep connections and being introspective at the same time.



MIDDLE SCHOOL (4-8)

FEATURED BOOK

*Up, Up, Ever Up! Junko Tabei:
A Life in the Mountains*

By Anita Yasuda, illustrated by Yuko Shimizu
Clarion Books, 2024



MINDS ON PROVOCATION

Ask students the following questions: “What is an activity that you like to do outdoors? How does being outdoors make you feel?” Alternatively, you can have the class brainstorm outdoor activities, or show pictures of outdoor activities and ask students to name and discuss them briefly. (Be sure to include a wide variety, such as walking in a park, riding a bike, hiking, helping in a community garden, fishing, swimming, skating, etc.)

Reinforce to students how participating in outdoor activities that we enjoy can help us develop love and respect for our environment, and even positively impact our mental health. Share that when we care about something, it can also encourage us to protect it.

Inform students that they will be learning about Junko Tabei, a Japanese mountaineer, author, and teacher who was passionate about the outdoors and the environment. She was the first woman to reach the summit of Mount Everest.

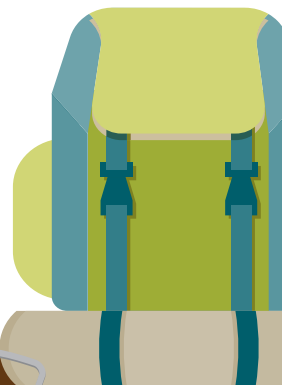
Ask students the following questions:

- What is mountain climbing?
- What is a mountaineer?
- What do you know about Mount Everest?

Affirm, expand, and clarify students’ responses. Share pictures of Junko Tabei and Mount Everest and explain that Mount Everest is the highest mountain on Earth above sea level. It is part of the Himalayas, a mountain range located between the borders of Nepal and China. Show a map of the world’s mountain ranges and help students find Mount Everest.

READ, PLAN, AND PRACTICE

Encourage students to take a look at the front and back cover of *Up, Up, Ever Up!*, as well as the front and end pages. Ask them to share their observations and initial ideas about the story.



Read *Up, Up, Ever Up!* as a class. While reading, have students reflect on the illustrations throughout the book. How do they bring Junko Tabei's story to life?

Afterwards, students will record their responses to the following questions:

- What do you think Junko Tabei loved about mountain climbing? How did it make her feel? Is there something that gives you as much joy as mountain climbing did for Junko?
- Junko and her expedition team used recycled materials to make gloves and other things they needed for the Mount Everest expedition. How was this a creative and sustainable solution?
- Junko's experiences showed her the importance of taking care of the mountains she loved and found joy from. What were some of the actions she took to keep the mountains free of pollution?
- Why do you think that building respect and care for the environment, like Junko Tabei did, is an important part of working towards protecting and sustaining it?

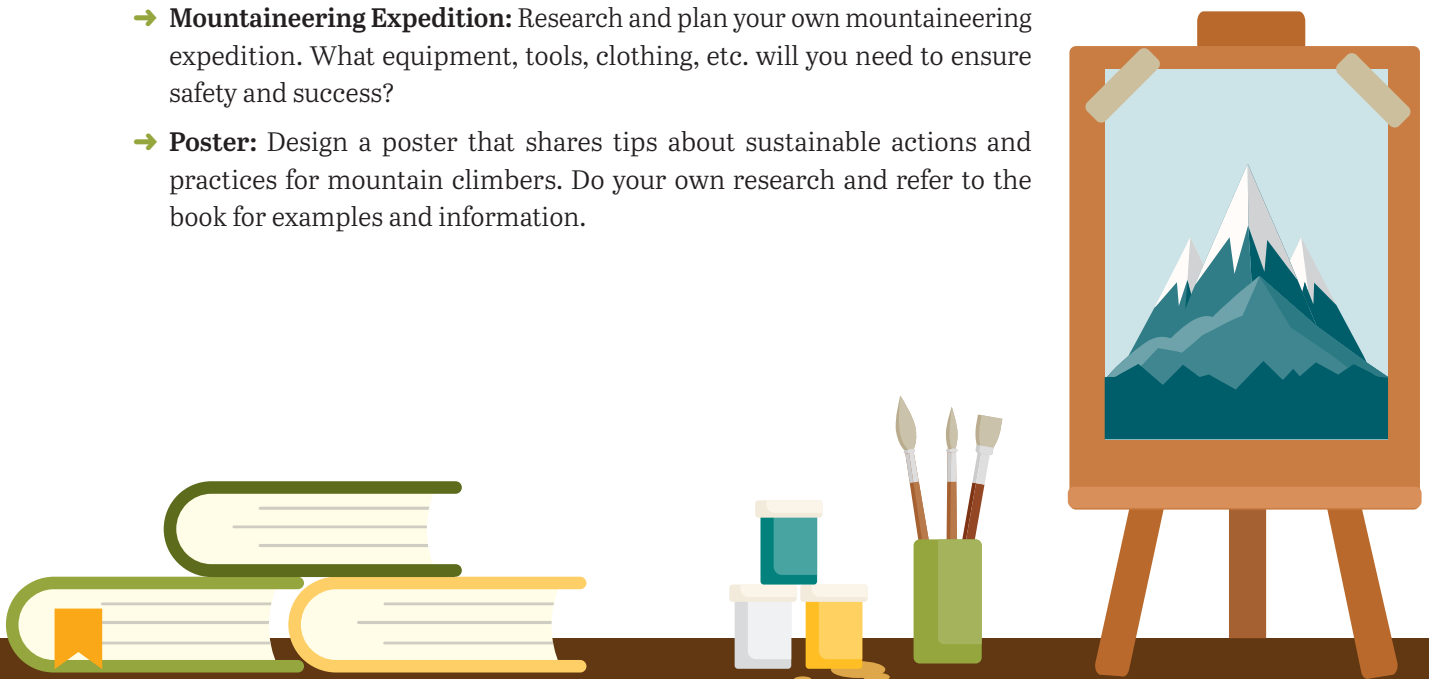
Read and discuss the author's note. It mentions the Himalayan Adventure Trust of Japan (HAT-J), which Junko Tabei became head of in 1990. Since then, the HAT-J has taken many actions to encourage sustainability and protect fragile mountain environments, such as "Take in-Take out" campaigns on hiking trails and organizing garbage clean-ups on Mount Everest.

In groups of 3-4, students will conduct research to learn about other sustainable mountaineering initiatives. They should also find at least one climate sustainability initiative in their own community. Groups will present their findings to the class.

MAKE, TINKER, AND MODIFY

Students will complete one of the following activities:

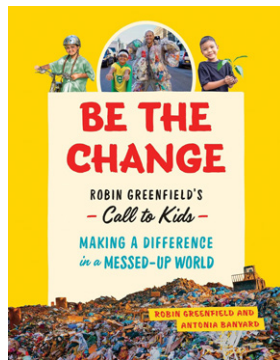
- **Letter Writing:** Write a letter to Junko Tabei sharing how you are inspired by her actions and legacy of mountaineering and sustainability.
- **Art Piece:** Use different art materials (pencil crayons, markers, paint, etc.) to create a picture of Mount Everest. Illustrations from the book can be used as a reference.
- **Mountaineering Expedition:** Research and plan your own mountaineering expedition. What equipment, tools, clothing, etc. will you need to ensure safety and success?
- **Poster:** Design a poster that shares tips about sustainable actions and practices for mountain climbers. Do your own research and refer to the book for examples and information.



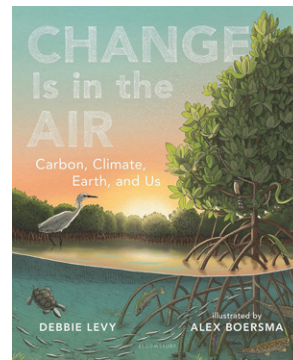
REFLECT AND CONNECT

- What did you learn from the story of Junko Tabei, specifically about the importance of protection and sustainability for mountains and the environment?
- What are 2-3 qualities that make Junko Tabei a great role model for people passionate about preserving the environment? How was Junko an environmental activist?
- What are some actions that you can take in your home, school, and community to help protect your local environment?
- What else are you interested in learning about this topic?
- How can you share what you've learned from *Up, Up, Ever Up!* with others?

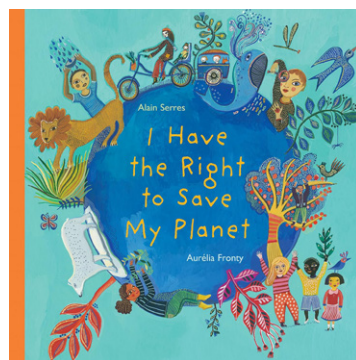
ADDITIONAL CANADIAN BOOKS TO SUPPORT THIS THEME



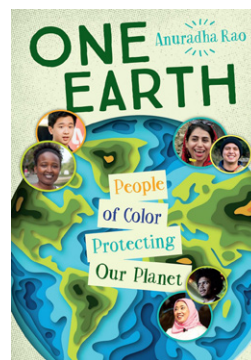
Be the Change: Robin Greenfield's Call to Kids: Making a Difference in a Messed-Up World by Robin Greenfield and Antonia Banyard (Greystone Kids, 2022)



Change Is in the Air: Carbon, Climate, Earth, and Us by Debbie Levy, illustrated by Alex Boersma (Bloomsbury Children's Books, 2024)



I Have the Right to Save My Planet by Alain Serres, illustrated by Aurélie Fronty, translated by Shelley Tanaka (Groundwood Books, 2021)



One Earth: People of Colour Protecting Our Planet by Anuradha Rao (Orca Book Publishers, 2020)

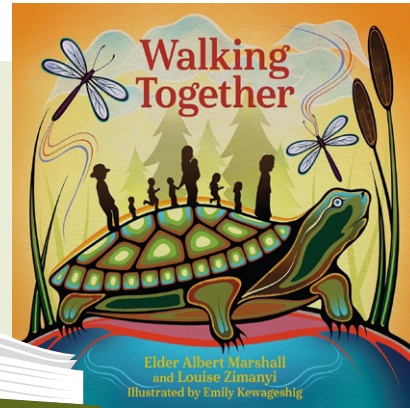


ADAPTATIONS FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (K-3)

FEATURED BOOK

Walking Together

By Elder Dr. Albert D. Marshall and Louise Zimanyi,
illustrated by Emily Kewageshig
Annick Press, 2023



In this lesson, students will learn that one of the key ideas related to environmental sustainability is the understanding that we are all connected; therefore, the actions that we take or do not take have an impact on the environment. The featured book will model and visualize this interconnectedness and relationship for K-3 students. For an activity, students can each write promises sharing one action they will take to protect the environment.

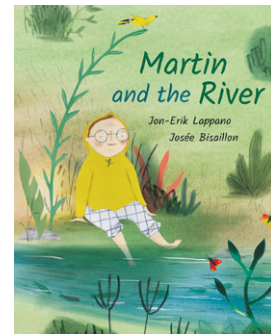
MORE CANADIAN BOOKS FOR GRADES K-3



Be a Good Ancestor by Leona Prince and Gabrielle Prince, illustrated by Carla Joseph (Orca Book Publishers, 2022)



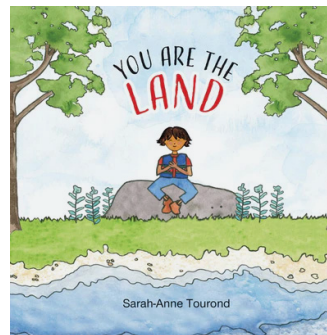
I Hear You, Forest by Kallie George, illustrated by Carmen Mok (Greystone Kids, 2021)



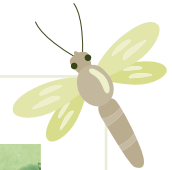
Martin and the River by Jon-Erik Lappano, illustrated by Josée Bisailon (Groundwood Books, 2022)



Walking Trees by Marie-Louise Gay (Groundwood Books, 2024)



You Are the Land by Sarah-Anne Tourond (Strong Nations Publishing, 2024)

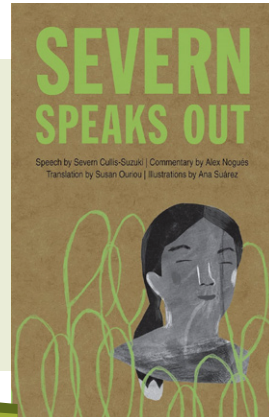


ADAPTATIONS FOR HIGH SCHOOL (9-12)

FEATURED BOOK

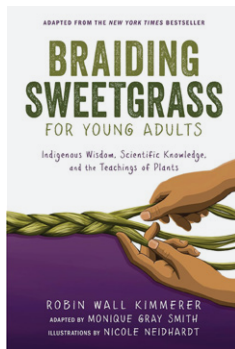
Severn Speaks Out

By Severn Cullis-Suzuki and Alex Nogués,
illustrated by Ana Suárez, translated by Susan Ouriou
Groundwood Books, 2022

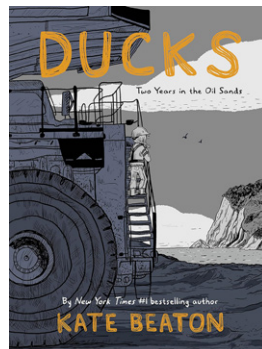


It is important to have role models who, through their advocacy, have brought awareness and change to the climate movement. Over 30 years ago, Severn Cullis-Suzuki—daughter of Canadian environmental activist David Suzuki—gave a speech at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro where she advocated for the environment and climate justice. Using the featured book, students will read her speech critically and consider what she was advocating for and its relevance today. Have there been changes to sustainability, environmental protections, etc. since Severn gave her speech? What still needs to be changed? Students can then research other environment and climate justice role models and the issues they are advocating for.

MORE CANADIAN BOOKS FOR GRADES 9-12



Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants by Robin Wall Kimmerer and Monique Gray Smith, illustrated by Nicole Neidhardt (Zest Books, 2022)



Ducks: Two Years in the Oil Sands by Kate Beaton (Drawn & Quarterly, 2022)

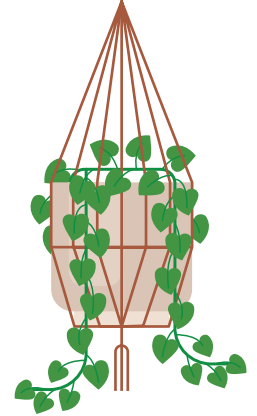


How to Change Everything: The Young Human's Guide to Protecting the Planet and Each Other by Naomi Klein and Rebecca Stefoff (Puffin Canada, 2021)



MORE RESOURCES

- [Author Interview](#): In this blog post, author Anita Yasuda delves into the inspiration behind *Up, Up, Ever Up!* and her writing process.
- [“How This Woman Became the First to Summit Mount Everest”](#): This digital resource from Google Arts & Culture includes photos and illustrations related to Junko Tabei’s various expeditions.
- [Junko Tabei](#): Learn more about Junko Tabei’s life and work through this biography from Women in Exploration.
- [Mountain Climbing Resources and Information](#): Find dozens of educational articles pertaining to mountain climbing on *National Geographic’s* website.
- [Teacher’s Guide](#): Created by former educator and current children’s author Marcie Colleen, this guide offers additional activities to help integrate *Up, Up, Ever Up!* into the curricula.



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