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TEACHmag

YOUR TEACHING COMMUNITY



**TIKTOK AND
TEENAGE
PEDAGOGY:**

**ENGAGING
GEN Z WITH
TRAUMA AND
NERVOUS
SYSTEM
LITERACY**

NOTES

The classroom is often where students begin to make sense of the world around them. In today's interconnected society, young people encounter a constant stream of information online—everything from creative, inspirational content to headlines of grief and uncertainty. While navigating their own personal challenges, students are also asked to process global crises and rapidly evolving technologies like artificial intelligence. In moments like these, the classroom becomes an important space for reflection, discussion, and understanding. This issue offers guidance for educators facing these realities, providing thoughtful perspectives and relevant resources to help support students as they chart their own paths forward.

To begin, Glenna Silk's article serves as a stark reflection on our current society. As a middle school English teacher, Silk wants her students to think critically about the world they live in. She achieves this by exploring the modern-day relevance of Ray Bradbury's dystopian novel *Fahrenheit 451*, using it to facilitate debates around mindless consumption, our reliance on screens, and the value of independent thinking.

Literary consultant Kitty Llerandi builds on these themes in her article, "Re-Seeing Revision." Here, she presents a middle school lesson plan that shows ELA teachers how to model ChatGPT as an effective revision partner, rather than a replacement for thought. When clear expectations are set around the use of AI in the classroom, Llerandi argues that it can become a valuable tool that actually encourages students to think more deeply, while also helping to strengthen the clarity and organization of their writing.

In "TikTok and Teenage Pedagogy," educator Lesley Machon offers an invitation to teachers feeling the weight of what their students are carrying. Through her work outside of the classroom as an interfaith chaplain, serving at hospitals and hospices across her community, Machon is no stranger to trauma. After watching her students struggle with many of the same issues, she wanted to cultivate her psychology classroom as a safe space—one where her students could learn healthy strategies for engaging with their personal challenges. She shares how she was able to redesign her curriculum thanks to a collaboration with Dr. Christine Gibson, a family physician

whose popular TikTok content discusses trauma literacy and nervous system science in ways that are accessible for young people. Together, Machon and Gibson are helping students build inner resources that will support them through whatever adversities may lie ahead.

One form of trauma that is becoming increasingly common is environmental trauma. Whether students have personally experienced the impacts of natural disasters or extreme weather events, or merely witnessed these catastrophes through screens, the impacts can be intensely felt either way—often manifesting in the form of [eco-anxiety](#). It's easy for students to despair in the face of so much destruction, especially as the rate of climate change continues to accelerate. But that's why hope is so important. In this issue's Bookstuff, we share a collection of stories that focus on real people taking tangible action to address the climate crisis. Perhaps these books will even inspire students to do the same.

Karen Wilfrid adds a bit of levity through her piece, where she extols the hidden magic of meetings. A busy middle school English teacher, Wilfrid is used to days that are filled with unpredictability, split-second decisions, and the pressure to always do more. In the midst of everyday challenges and non-stop activity, meetings emerge as an oasis of predictability, respite, and passivity. A time to sit and listen, and politely zone out for a few minutes if necessary. Couldn't we all use a few more moments like that? Wilfrid's article serves as a reminder to cherish those opportunities when they come.

Lastly, there's been a lot of hockey content in the news recently. Much of it a step forward for diversity and inclusivity in the sport but, regrettably, some of it moving backwards instead. Rabia Khokhar's lesson plan for students in Grades 4-6 presents a timely and relevant way to raise the subject of representation in hockey.

However you choose to explore these ideas with your students, we hope this issue gives you something useful to take back to your classroom.

As always, thanks for reading. See you next time.



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HAS THIS DYSTOPIAN NOVEL BECOME A REALITY?

Teaching the Modern-Day Relevance of *Fahrenheit 451*

BY GLENNA SILK



In today's society, the need to keep ourselves constantly entertained—whether by scrolling through social media feeds, streaming a never-ending supply of TV shows, or drowning out the world through music and podcasts—has become a topic of frequent discussion, particularly [the effect this is having on children](#).

As adults, many of us can remember a time before Netflix and TikTok, before Google, AirPods, and the rise of AI. Our students, however, do not.

But although this mindless consumption may have taken on new forms over the years, the pattern itself certainly isn't new. Ray Bradbury noticed it all the way back in 1953, when he took an evening stroll around his neighborhood only to find every single house had their TV turned on. He was the only one outside. This moment is partly what inspired him to write his dystopian novel *Fahrenheit 451*, a cautionary tale that depicts a world dominated by screens and citizens that follow blindly.

The story focuses on a character named Guy Montag, who lives in a society where people are encouraged to constantly listen to the radio or one of the many television sets throughout their home. In this world, freedom of thought is discouraged and reading is forbidden.

Montag works as a “fireman”—not to put out fires, but to burn and destroy any books that are found. Those who disobey the book law risk capture and even death. But everything begins to shift when Montag witnesses a shocking act of defiance: a woman who chooses to remain in her home, surrounded by the books she loves, as firemen reduce it to ashes.

Staring at the flames, Montag says, “There must be something in books, things we can't imagine, to make a woman stay in a burning house... You don't stay for nothing.” This scene, paired with a simple, unsettling question from his new neighbor Clarisse—“Are you happy?”—sparks the first stirrings of change in Montag. Slowly, he begins his transformation from a blind follower to a free-thinker.

While Bradbury's novel was originally written over seventy years ago, its themes are more pertinent than ever—especially in the classroom.

CONNECTING IT TO THE PRESENT

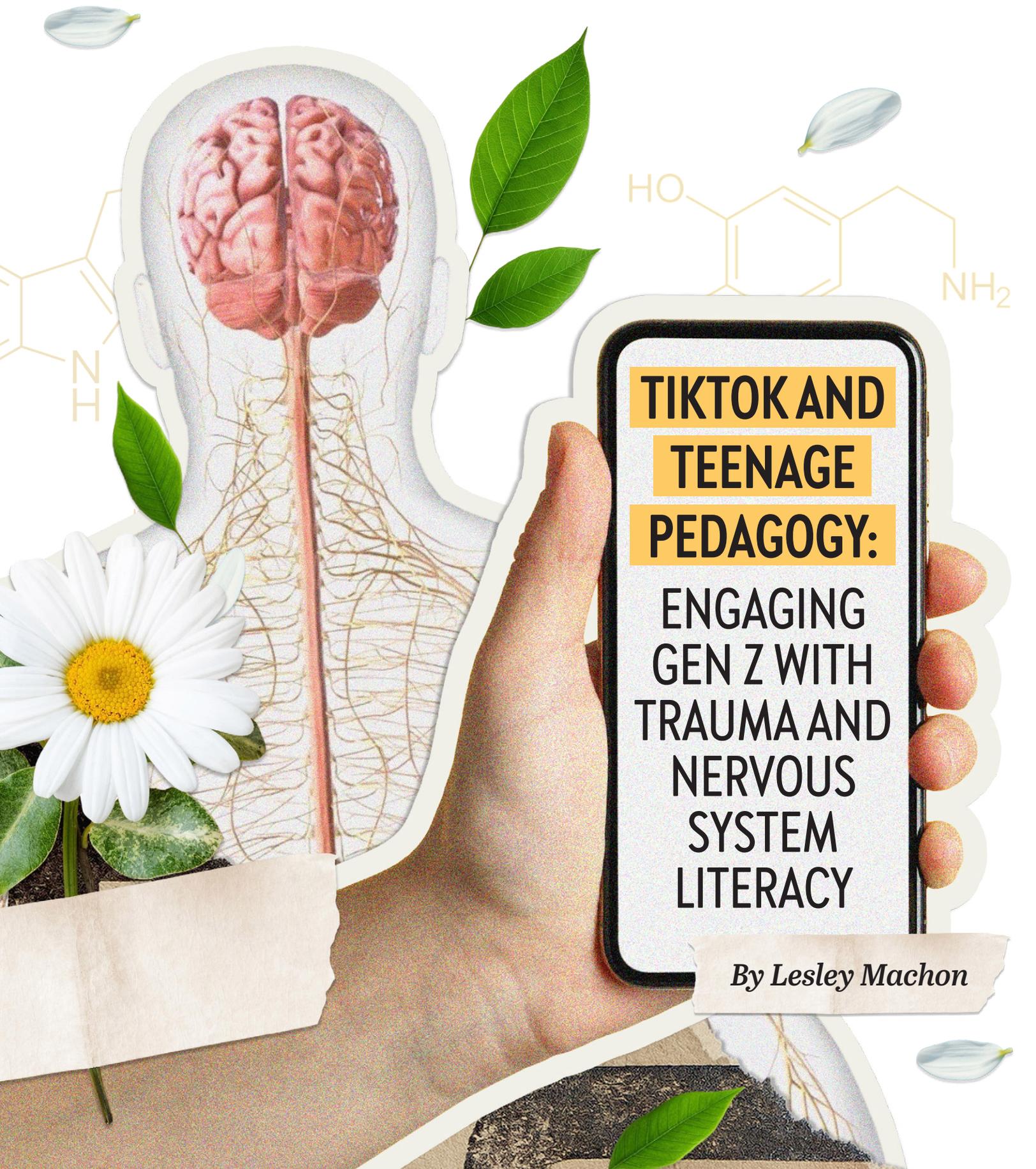
Nothing draws students into a lesson more than connecting it to topics they care about and see as relevant to their lives. At first, students and teachers alike might think that *Fahrenheit 451* feels outdated, but the reality is, it still ignites conversations that are anything but old-fashioned: class discussions quickly become lively, with kids talking more passionately than ever!

The novel becomes a powerful lens for examining current events, from Elon Musk's Neuralink to the growing addiction to short-form content. As artificial intelligence tools like Gemini, ChatGPT, and countless others become part of everyday life, students can be prompted to consider what might happen when technology not only assists humanity but begins to take control entirely.

By comparing Bradbury's dystopia with our own tech-saturated reality, students can take a closer look at how modern innovations shape their attention spans, influence their independent thought, and even challenge their sense of free will. Suddenly, the book doesn't feel like fiction at all. It feels like a warning.

Keeping students genuinely engaged is every teacher's goal; there's nothing better than seeing more than just two kids raising their hands. In my own

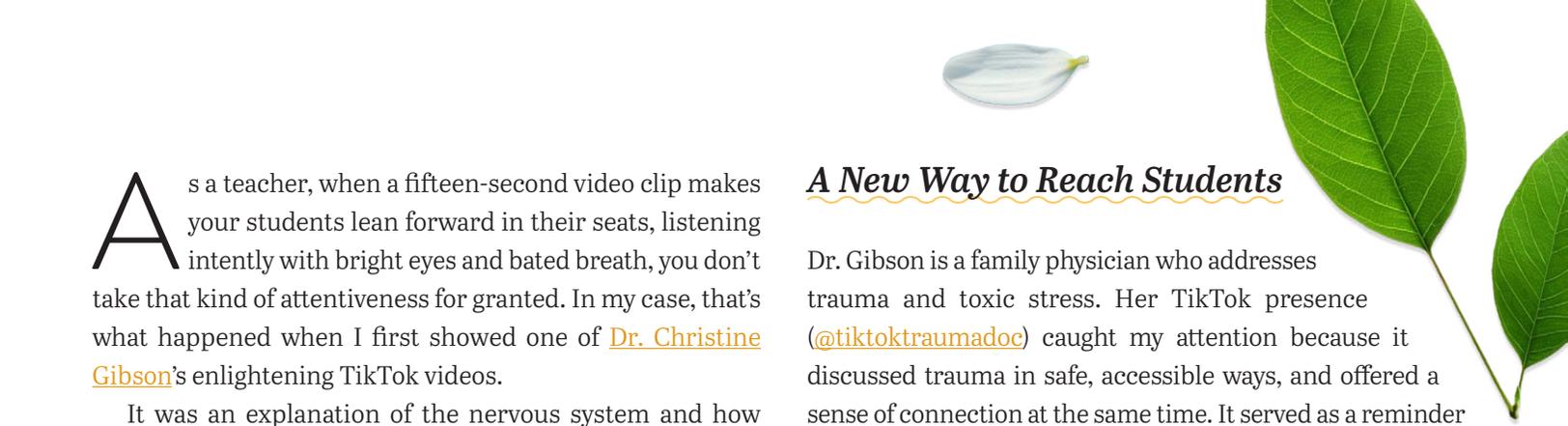
TIP: If you're looking for additional real-world situations to connect to the novel, check out this list of [supplemental texts](#).



**TIKTOK AND
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**ENGAGING
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By Lesley Machon



As a teacher, when a fifteen-second video clip makes your students lean forward in their seats, listening intently with bright eyes and bated breath, you don't take that kind of attentiveness for granted. In my case, that's what happened when I first showed one of [Dr. Christine Gibson's](#) enlightening TikTok videos.

It was an explanation of the nervous system and how somatic techniques can help us attend to our well-being. Easy to understand and digest, without inaccessible jargon, Dr. Gibson's content cut through the social media clutter to reach my students, meeting them where they were in the vernacular of a generation accustomed to screens.

Engaging with Trauma

When I first began teaching a psychology elective course two years ago, my goal was to cultivate a learning environment that invited students into meaningful engagement with all kinds of personal challenges—from mental health diagnoses and neurodivergence to traumatic experiences and everyday stress. I wanted my classroom to be a space my students could, however briefly, put down all the heaviness they carry with them every day.

Aside from my work in education, I've also spent the last several years training and serving as an interfaith chaplain in hospitals, hospices, and addiction centers across my city. I sit with youth and adults in their most tender hours, in the blue glow of ICU monitors, in twilight rooms where their breath becomes laboured. Together, we wade into the quiet that follows confession, hurt, and grief.

I am no stranger to unresolved trauma, caused by anything from environmental catastrophe to personal loss, and how it can transform into a series of sleepless nights, hands that won't stop moving, or a winter fog of the mind that hangs heavy, enduring. I've seen the same thing in my classroom, have watched students become disengaged and disconnected from themselves, from each other, and from the world around them; so many carrying pain that felt illegible to the systems meant to support them.

Although I have witnessed and felt, at the deepest level, how our inner worlds and outer crises are braided together, I didn't yet know how to work that knowledge into my classroom in a way that would be meaningful to my students.

Then, I came across Dr. Christine Gibson's content on TikTok.

A New Way to Reach Students

Dr. Gibson is a family physician who addresses trauma and toxic stress. Her TikTok presence ([@tiktoktraumadoc](#)) caught my attention because it discussed trauma in safe, accessible ways, and offered a sense of connection at the same time. It served as a reminder that all of us are struggling and that we can learn new ways to express this struggle.

The first thing that came to my mind after watching a few of Dr. Gibson's videos was, *I should show this to my students*. Not only did her content embody a sense of psychological safety, it also offered practical skills in a way that kids could relate to. Her framework honoured the intelligence of young people, rather than talking down to them, and it offered a language with which to make sense of and connect to their nervous systems.

These days, the reality is that plenty of young people are learning about mental health online. It's astonishing how many of them use TikTok for online searches. A UBC [qualitative study](#) uncovered that kids find TikTok easy to access, that it gives a sense of connection (and validation) and provides skills to cope with their challenges.

If this was the material my students related to, why not incorporate it into my teaching?

The initial positive reaction from my students after I showed them one of Dr. Gibson's videos told me I was on the right track. So I took things one step further and tried designing a few lessons based on her book *The Modern Trauma Toolkit*. It provided just what I needed.

Those lessons were met with such enthusiasm from my students that I pulled apart my entire curriculum (activities, lesson plans, and all) and recreated it. Since then, I've had students showing up at lunch, after school, and even waiting outside my door before class begins. Their eagerness speaks to the success of this new approach, and I look forward to continuing on this path.

The River of Life

We started with water. The "River of Life" project, which came from the opening chapter of Dr. Gibson's book, invited students to trace their life journeys—or those of an ancestor, character, or another figure whom they felt safe to explore.

10 ESSENTIAL CLIMATE ACTION BOOKS FOR KIDS

BY KELSEY MCCALLUM

Did you know that over 65% of [Canadian](#) and [American](#) students report feeling anxious about climate change and 75% of youth [worldwide](#) are frightened for the future?

[Eco-anxiety](#) is real, and kids are feeling it. That's why hope matters. When students see authentic, tangible examples of people taking action—young activists, scientists, and communities creating solutions and fighting against environmental injustice—the climate crisis stops feeling overwhelming and starts feeling solvable.

These 10 books help educate students about the science of climate change, while also introducing them to everyday people all over the world who are working towards a more sustainable planet—and inspiring them to do the same.

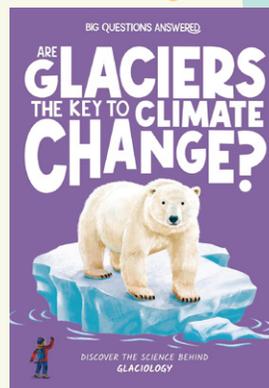
For teachers who are looking to do their own reading about climate change, be sure to check out our TEACHER'S CORNER segment, featuring recommended books from members of the TEACH team.

ARE GLACIERS THE KEY TO CLIMATE CHANGE? DISCOVER THE SCIENCE BEHIND GLACIOLOGY

BY OLIVIA WATSON, ILLUSTRATED BY DANIEL LIMON

Beetle Books (October 2025) | Grade Level: K-3

This non-fiction text offers young readers an easy introduction to glaciers and the people who study them. It explores questions like: How do glaciers change the shape of Earth? What can they tell us about our planet's past, present, and future? And many more. The book includes back matter with glacier facts, as well as QR codes that link to downloadable teacher resources.

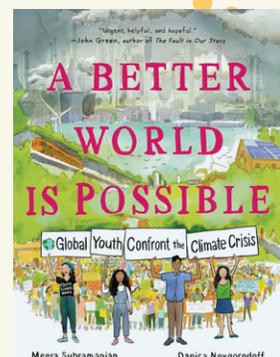


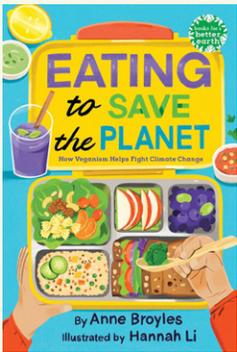
A BETTER WORLD IS POSSIBLE: GLOBAL YOUTH CONFRONT THE CLIMATE CRISIS

BY MEERA SUBRAMANIAN AND DANICA NOVGORODOFF

First Second (March 2026) | Grade Level: 9-12

Environmental journalist Meera Subramanian and best-selling illustrator Danica Novgorodoff have teamed up to create this graphic novel guide to climate change, and what today's young people are doing about it. Through the stories of four youth activists, readers will learn about the science of our changing planet and what solutions are possible when we all come together to fight for a better world.



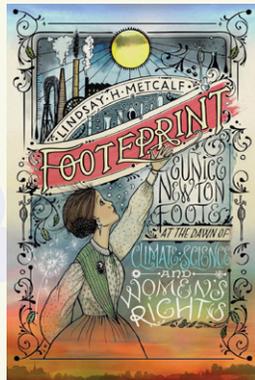


EATING TO SAVE THE PLANET: HOW VEGANISM HELPS FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE

BY ANNE BROYLES, ILLUSTRATED BY HANNAH LI

Holiday House (August 2025) | Grade Level: 3-7

Eating to Save the Planet presents an accessible entry to plant-based diets for middle-grade readers. Its chapters delve into the environmental impact of eating meat and what terms like “vegan” and “plant-based” actually mean, while also encouraging kids to think about where their food comes from, why that matters, and small steps they can take to make a difference. Back matter includes nutritional information and a list of additional resources. A [Teacher’s Guide](#) is available as well.

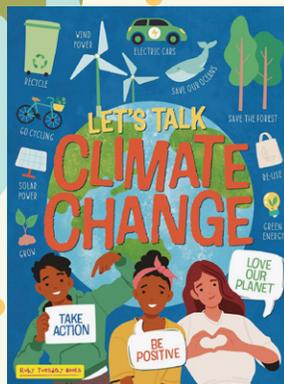


FOOTPRINT: EUNICE NEWTON FOOTE AT THE DAWN OF CLIMATE SCIENCE AND WOMEN’S RIGHTS

BY LINDSAY H. METCALF

Charlesbridge Teen (February 2026) | Grade Level: 7-12

This historical YA novel-in-verse showcases the extraordinary discoveries of Eunice Newton Foote, the first woman to point to carbon dioxide as the cause of climate change—what’s now known as the “greenhouse effect.” When she initially shared her findings in 1865, they were largely ignored. In fact, the discovery of the greenhouse effect is often attributed to John Tyndall, who published his own research paper three years later. But today, Foote is finally getting the credit she deserves, as seen in this empowering story perfect for teens interested in STEM, women’s rights, and the history of the climate crisis.

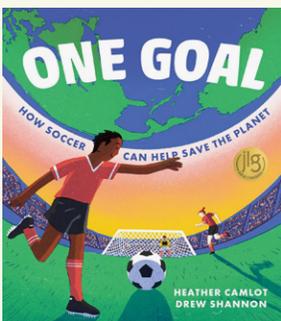


LET’S TALK CLIMATE CHANGE: TAKE ACTION, BE POSITIVE, LOVE OUR PLANET

BY RUTH OWEN

Ruby Tuesday Books (February 2026) | Grade Level: 2-5

In an era where there’s plenty of “doom and gloom” commentary related to the climate crisis, *Let’s Talk Climate Change* presents an open and honest narrative framed around optimism. After all, the best counter to the eco-anxiety that so many kids are experiencing is to help them understand the science of climate change, as well as what each of us can do to take action.



ONE GOAL: HOW SOCCER CAN HELP SAVE THE PLANET

BY HEATHER CAMLOT, ILLUSTRATED BY DREW SHANNON

Groundwood Books (April 2026) | Grade Level: 4-7

Publishing just a few months before the 2026 World Cup, *One Goal* looks at what soccer players, clubs, and fans around the world are doing to build a greener future. Whether by using soccer fields to collect and clean rainwater, making seats from recycled fish nets, or biking to and from games, there are plenty of ways that soccer can chart a path forward for sustainability in sports.



RIDING THROUGH HISTORY

THE RCMP FROM THEN TO NOW

The RCMP has played a significant role in Canadian history for over 150 years, and has contributed to shaping our country into what it is today.

Our new digital resource offers a deeper look into the organization’s past, while encouraging students to consider what it could look like in the future. This resource can also serve as a great starting point for introducing students to the RCMP’s impact on cultures and communities across Canada.



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