



**A teacher's guide**  
**created by Marcie Colleen**  
**based upon the picture book**  
**written by Sophia Gholz and**  
**illustrated by Kayla Harren**



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This classroom guide is designed for students in first through third grade. It is assumed that teachers will adapt each activity to fit the needs and abilities of their own students.

It offers activities to help teachers integrate *The Boy Who Grew a Forest* into the curricula.

All activities were created in conjunction with the Common Core and other relevant content standards.

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## Before You Read...

Before reading *The Boy Who Grew a Forest*...

Look closely at the Front Cover ~

- Read the title aloud.
- Describe what you see.
- Who do you think the boy is? What is he doing?
- Imagine you are the boy in the illustration. How does this pose make you feel?
- When and where do you think this story takes place? Today or a long time ago? Nearby or far away? What clues on the cover tell you this?
- Can you guess what the story might be about?

The Back Cover~

- Describe what you see.

The Jacket Flap~

- Read the text on the front jacket flap.
- What more do you learn from this text?
- Does this text make you want to read the book? Why or why not?



# English Language Arts

## Reading Comprehension

Now read or listen to the book.

Help students summarize in their own words what the book is about.

- Where does the boy live?
- Why does he like trees so much? Do you use trees for shade, food, and shelter? How so?
- The boy's island was eroding. Explain in your own words what was happening.
- What was the boy's fear?
- What happened when the boy took his fears to the village elders?
- The boy decided he needed to plant more than just the bamboo. Why? How did the boy create a richer soil for more plants?
- When animals returned to the forest, what issues did the village have? How did Jadav address these problems?
- Name two ways in which Jadav protected his forest.
- Explain what you think Jadav meant by the following quote: "Only by growing plants, the Earth will survive."
  - How is the Molai forest a living example of this quote?

Let's talk about the people who made *The Boy Who Grew a Forest*.

- Who is the author?
- Who is the illustrator?
- What kind of work did each person do to make the book?

Now, let's look closely at the illustrations.

- Look closely at the details that Kayla Harren included in the illustrations.
- Print out photos from the Internet of the Molai forest.
- Draw your own version of the Molai Forest.
- Display the finished drawings in the classroom.



## Reading Nonfiction

While reading *The Boy Who Grew a Forest* aloud to the class, have students take notes in two columns:

- *Things We Learned*
- *Questions We Have*

Pause before each page turn to add notes to the columns. These columns can either be individual or hung on the board and worked on as a class.

Things We Learned (Facts)	Questions We Have	Answers We Found

- Once the story is read, discuss the *Questions We Have* column.

- Were any of these questions answered as the story went along?
- If so, ask students to find the answer within the text.
- Record the answer next to the question in a third column labelled *Answers We Found*.
- For all remaining questions in the *Questions We Have* column, that have yet to be answered, students will need to take the steps to find answers, either through Internet or book research.
  - Discuss how to find answers to questions through research.
  - Assign students to specific questions to help them focus.
  - Record all answers in the *Answers We Found* column.
- After the answers have been shared with the class, engage in a discussion on research practices.
  - What was the most difficult about finding answers?
  - Was it easier to find answers on the Internet or in a book?
  - Which source is more reliable, the Internet or a printed book? Why?
  - How can you determine whether to trust a source?
  - What tips would you give someone who is about to do research?
- Read the About Jadav “Molai” Payeng and Author’s Note sections at the back of the book.
  - Create an additional chart to document what information in this section was included in the story and what information was not included.
  - Why do you think Gholz chose to include certain information and leave other information to the back matter?
  - Choose three facts from the back matter that was not included in the story and explain why you think each was excluded.

*Extension:* Design and illustrate posters representing each Fact, Question, and researched Answer based on *The Boy Who Grew a Forest* and display them within the classroom.



### Eco-Vocabulary

*The Boy Who Grew a Forest* contains many “ecology-related” words which may be new for students. Encourage them to use context clues from both the text and illustrations to infer meanings.

Deforestation

Reforestation

Erosion

Endangered

Biodiversity

Ecosystem

### Additional Exploration:

- While they read, ask students to look carefully for words they do not know. As soon as they come across a new vocabulary word, they should jot it down.
- Look up the unknown word in the dictionary. (Depending on the level of your students, a student volunteer can do this or the teacher can.) Read the definition.
- Come up with a way to remember what the word means. Using Total Physical Response, students can create an action that symbolizes the word and helps them remember it.

# Ecology

We all live in incredibly rich ecosystems, whether we're aware of the environmental diversity around us. Even in the largest cities you can find sparrows surviving on seeds, bees circling around flowers, and squirrels snacking on berries, all participating in the same network of energy, co-dependence, and survival.

## Observing Nature

In this activity students will learn to be observant to even the littlest pieces of the outdoors, like Jadav Payeng.

Create a Nature Journal:

- Gather together 6-8 pieces of paper (some can be lined for writing, others blank for drawing).
- Add on top a piece of blank paper for the cover.
- Punch three holes through the pieces of paper and the cover sheet.
- Cut a piece of cardboard just a bit larger than your paper.
- Punch three corresponding holes in the cardboard.
- Place the papers on top of the cardboard and top everything with the cover sheet.
- Line up the paper and cardboard holes. Then tie together with yarn or string.
- You are now ready to head outside and observe nature.

Observing nature.

- Find a spot to sit outside where you can be quiet and observe. Be sure to have your Nature Journal and a pencil. You may use colored pencils, crayons or markers if you prefer.
- Sit for at least fifteen minutes. You may set an alarm.
- Look all around you. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell? What do you feel?
- Find something you want to write about or draw and record it in your Nature Observation notebook.
- Continue to observe nature in the same spot, fifteen minutes at a time, for a whole week. Every day, take care to notice something different to write about or draw.

Share your notebook with the class.

- What did you find when you paid attention?
- What did you feel? What did you smell? What did you hear? What did you see?
- Did the weather ever change? How was it different? How did the weather (wind, rain, snow, etc.) affect nature?
- What astonished you?
- If you were to continue observing nature, what spot would you choose? Why?

## Create a Local Plant Guide

Different plants grow in different places in the world. When Jadav began planting, he had to know what types of plants would grow in his area. Do you know what types of trees and plants grow in your area?



### Materials:

Paper or Notebook, Crayons or Markers, Pencils, Tape

### Directions:

- 1) Take a walk around your school or neighborhood. As you go, document the different plants and trees that you see. Draw a picture of the plants and, next to the picture, write a short description of the: bark, leaves, colors, flowers, seeds, or anything else that you notice about the plant. You may also make a bark rubbing and collect fallen leaves, seeds, and flowers.
- 2) If you collect anything from the ground, tape it onto the page next to your plant description and drawing. NOTE: Be sure you only collect what has fallen on the ground. If a plant is still growing, we should leave it untouched, so that it can keep growing.
- 3) When you have completed your plant guide, visit your school library or local library to look for books about the types of plants found in your area. Compare your notes with your reference books. Can you identify which plants you found in your field guide?

## Social Studies

### **Dear Jadav Payeng...**

Jadav Payeng is inspirational for making a difference where he lived. Using the moments in *The Boy Who Grew a Forest* as inspiration, write a letter to Jadav Payeng. The letter should include:

- Detail about what you found inspirational about the book
- An example of how you could plan to use this inspiration to make a difference in your own community
- A thank you for the inspiration

### **Who are the Heroes in Your Neighborhood?**

Every day we are surrounded by people who quietly fight for the common good or stand up for what they believe is right. These outstanding individuals show what the power of one can accomplish in our neighborhoods and communities.

Who are the unsung heroes in your neighborhood?

Interview and write a report about someone in your own community who you think makes a positive impact. Topics to include:

- Why you believe this person to be a hero to the neighborhood and community.
- Describe the person activity/activities that significantly benefitted their neighborhood.
- How long has the hero contributed to the neighborhood? What was their most recent activity?
- Describe the creative and innovative methods used by the hero to benefit their neighborhood.
- Include any other interesting information relevant to the hero's activities.
- What is this hero's impact to the neighborhood and/or community at large?

Include documentation such as pamphlets, articles, presentations, photographs, news clippings, letters of support, etc. if applicable.

Present these reports to the class. Invite the heroes for a "Neighborhood Hero" celebration.



## Kids can Make a Difference!

There are small things that people can do everyday that can have a BIG impact on our environment.

Check out 50 Ways to Help (<http://www.50waystohelp.com/>).

As a class, pledge to do at least ONE of these 50 ways each day for a month.

For each way the student helps, they will be given a star. (Deeds should be verified with a parent/guardian/teacher's signature).

The stars can be tallied at the end of the month for prizes. Also, set a class goal, if the class "earns" 200 stars at the end of the month maybe there will be a pizza party!



## Geography

### Destination: Molai Forest

As a class, locate the Molai Forest on a map and or/globe. Then, conduct research of the area and the Indian people on the Internet.

Information of interest can include:

- History
- Culture
- Music and dance
- Diet
- Shelter
- Climate
- Geography
- Economy

Gather photographs of the Molai Forest.

Then, plan a week-long fictitious trip to the Molai Forest. Be sure to plan transportation to and within India, food, what to pack, what to do and see. Detail your trip in a daily itinerary. Include a budget, considering local economy and the US dollar.

### Postcards from Assam, India

Molai Forest is a forest on Majuli Island in the Brahmaputra River near Assam, India. Conduct some research about the area.

If you were to travel there:

- How would you get there?
- What would you see?
- What would you hear?
- What would you do?
- What would the weather be like?



Create a large postcard of your trip to Assam, India. Be sure to illustrate one side and include a note to a best friend or family member on the other side. Be sure to be descriptive, so that the person who gets the postcard can best imagine your trip.

Display the postcards on a bulletin board, along with a map indicating where Assam, India is in the world.





**As you read**  
***The Boy Who Grew A Forest: The True Story of Jadav Payeng,***  
**use this activity sheet to help you keep track of Jadav's story.**

Jadav Payeng lived on a large river island in \_\_\_\_\_.

After noticing that his island was shrinking and sharing his fears with his village, he was gifted 20 \_\_\_\_\_.

Jadav planted and he created a watering system but realized that if he wanted more plants to grow he would have to \_\_\_\_\_.

Once his forest grew, wildlife such as \_\_\_\_\_ returned for the first time in many years.

Today the forest still exists and it is called \_\_\_\_\_.



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Imagine you are in Jadav's shoes and notice the erosion of your island which is leading to the loss of wildlife. Write a letter to those in your village explaining why it is important to regrow the forest. Why are the trees important? What would happen without the wildlife? How does everyone benefit from having a thriving ecosystem?

*Dear Village Members,*

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Can you think of an environmental cause in your neighborhood that you can help?

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