



Classroom Guide for
EVERGLADES FOREVER: RESTORING
AMERICA'S GREAT WETLAND
by **Trish Marx**
photographs by **Cindy Karp**

Reading Level

*Reading Level: Grade 4

Interest Level: Grades 3-7

Guided Reading Level: S

(Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula)

Themes

Ecology, Environment, Nature, Preserving and Restoring Natural Resources

Synopsis

Under the direction of veteran teacher Jacquelyn (Jackie) Stone, a fifth-grade class at Avocado Elementary School in Homestead, Florida, studies the nearby Everglades. The book follows the students as they learn about this endangered and very unusual wetland. Some of the students make a preliminary trip to Shark Valley and the Miccosukee Reservation and report back to the class. Then the entire group takes a field trip to Everglades National Park where students learn about the unique habitats of many birds, fish, and animals and come to appreciate the numerous trees and plants in this region. The students also learn about the effects of development and pollution on the Everglades, and what is being done to stop and reverse the damage. Vital to this effort is the Everglades Restoration Plan, an unprecedented ecological intervention to restore the natural flow of water and allow the plants and animals of the Everglades to continue to survive. Beautiful photographs accompany the narrative text. Both the author and photographer spent time with Ms. Stone's class and accompanied them on their visit to the Everglades.

Background

The Everglades were created about 10,000 years ago by melting ice from the last ice sheet of the Pleistocene Ice Age. As the ice raised the level of the sea and flooded streams, the region turned into a wetland. Today the Everglades stretch from Lake Okechobee to Florida Bay. About one-fifth of the area is Everglades National Park. Although various peoples, including the Miccosukees, have lived in the Everglades for centuries, it wasn't until 1906 that the state of Florida first started draining the land and using it for farming. Since then the fate of the Everglades has been precarious, shifting

between the demands of increasing development and the efforts of environmental and other concerned groups to preserve the region.

Teacher Tip

This is the perfect book to use when celebrating spring. Use it to tap into an awakened interest in environmental issues during the observation of Earth Day and other events centered on the natural world.

BEFORE READING**Prereading Focus Questions**

Before introducing the book, share the background information with students. Then you may wish to have students discuss one or more of the following questions as a motivation for reading.

1. Why do school classes go on field trips?
2. What kind of field trip do you like best? Why? What have you learned on your favorite field trip?
3. What is a wetland?
4. What does it mean to protect a natural area?
5. What kinds of things can people do to protect the environment? How do you try to help the environment?
6. Where are the Everglades?
7. What do you think the Everglades are like? What would you expect to see there?

Exploring the Book

Display the book cover and have a volunteer read aloud the title, including the subtitle. Ask them what they think the title means. What does restore mean? Why do you think the Everglades needs to be restored?

Ask students to study the photograph and then tell in their own words what they think the Everglades is like. Turn to the photograph on the back cover and ask students to speculate why the students are in the Everglades. Would you like to visit this place too?

Setting a Purpose for Reading

Ask students to read to find out what is so special about the Everglades and why the Everglades is in danger.

VOCABULARY

Write each of the following list of glossary words from the book on the chalkboard.

adapt	fungus	phosphorous
alga	habitat	pollutant
aquifer	hammock	pollution
blueprint	invertebrate	porous

brackish
dike

levee
lichen

prairie
slough

Write each of the following list of glossary words from the book on the chalkboard.

ecosystem
elevation
endangered

marine
migrate
periphyton

species
swamp
thermoregulate

Have each student work with a partner and assign each team two or three words from the list. Have students write each word on an index card, find the meaning in the glossary at the end of the book, and then write the meaning on the other side of the card. Under each word, tell students to write a sentence using the word correctly. Have the teams take turns reading aloud their words and sentences to the class.

READING AND RESPONDING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to help guide their understanding of the book. Encourage students to refer to passages in the book to support their responses.

1. Why is the Everglades in danger? Give at least two examples.
2. Who was Marjorie Stoneman Douglas?
3. How does sawgrass help the Everglades?
4. What are some different names for the Everglades? Do you think these are good names for this area? Why or why not?
5. Who are the Miccosukees? Why are they important to the Everglades?
6. How have farming and development in Florida affected the Everglades?
7. What is a main goal of the Everglades Restoration Plan?
8. Why do the animals spread out in the Everglades during the wet season?
9. Why is the fate of the Everglades a problem for all generations?
10. Why are the Everglades special?

Literature Circles

If you use literature circles during reading time, students might find the following suggestions helpful in developing the roles of the circle members.

- The **Questioner** might use questions similar to those in the Discussion Question section of this guide to help group members explore the text.
- The **Passage Locator** might look for lines that describe the wildlife in the Everglades.

- The **Illustrator** might draw pictures of some of the plants or animals found in the Everglades, or of your class taking a walk through a part of the Everglades.
- The **Connector** might find out about other wetlands that are endangered.
- The **Summarizer** might provide a brief summary of the pages that the group is discussing.
- The **Investigator** might visit some of the Web sites listed on page 38 of the book to learn additional facts about the Everglades.

*There are many resource books available with more information about organizing and implementing literature circles. Three such books you may wish to refer to are: *Getting Started With Literature Circles* by Katherine L. Schlick Noe and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 1999), *Literature Circles: Voice And Choice In Book Clubs And Reading Groups* by Harvey Daniels (Stenhouse, 2002), and *Literature Circles Resource Guide* by Bonnie Campbell Hill, Katherine L. Schlick Noe, and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 2000).

Reader's Response

Use the following questions or similar ones to help students practice active reading and personalize what they have read. Suggest that students respond in reader's journals or in oral discussion.

1. Would you want to visit the Everglades? Why? What would you want to see?
2. Why is the topic of this book important?
3. What would you tell a friend about this book?
4. What do you think is the most wonderful thing about the Everglades?
5. When is there silence in your life? Why is it good to have silent moments?

Other Writing Activities

You may wish to have students participate in one or more of the following writing activities. Set aside time for them to share and discuss their work.

1. Remind the class that the students in the book met several people who work in the Everglades. Have students write a list of questions they would like to ask Ranger Ben, Captain Ernie, or Ranger Jim about the Everglades.
2. Suggest that students compile minibooks of Facts About the Everglades using information from *Everglades Forever* and other sources, including some of the books and Web sites listed at the back of the book.
3. Have students choose a photograph in the book and use it as inspiration for a poem.
4. Read this quote to the class by Marjory Stoneman Douglas: "There are no other Everglades in the world. . . . Nothing anywhere else is like them." Then have students find out more about Douglas and write brief biographies about her.

ELL (ESL) Teaching Strategies

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are learning to speak English as a second language.

1. Make key words from the book as concrete as possible by linking them to an object, photograph, or illustration. For example, use the photograph on page 11 to help these students understand the word *alligator*.
2. Involve students physically with the page, using sticky notes or a piece of cardboard to guide reading from one line or one paragraph to the next.
3. Build confidence by praising students' efforts to experiment with a new language in class.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

To help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas, introduce some of the following activities.

Science

1. Have students reread pages 10–11 of *Everglades Forever*. Then ask them to make a diagram showing how the food web in the Everglades works. Remind students to add labels to their diagrams.
2. Suggest that students choose one of the following trees and plants and prepare a short research report on it to share with the class: cypress, sawgrass, cattail, mangrove, gumbo limbo tree, cabbage palm, marlberry bush, blue porter flower.

Social Studies

1. Remind students that part of the Everglades is a national park. Have students find out what the designation of national park means. They might visit the Web site www.everglades.national-park.com to learn about the facilities available for visitors. Suggest that students plan an imaginary visit to Everglades National Park for your class.
2. Point out that park rangers help the children and Ms. Stone's class on their visit to Everglades National Park. Have students find out more about the job of a park ranger. Questions students might try to answer include: What kinds of skills does a ranger need? What education is needed? What kind of experience is needed? What are the working hours for a ranger? What kinds of problems does a ranger face? What is the best thing about being a park ranger?

Art

1. Write the following list of animals found in the Everglades on a sheet of poster paper: golden orb spider, Double Crested Cormorant, snail, shrimp, crayfish, turtle, snake, egret, alligator, raccoon, Great Blue Heron, deer, Florida panther, Anhinga, Osprey, wood stork, bonefish, pelican, manatee, American crocodile, red shouldered hawk.

2. Have each student choose an animal to paint. Many of these are shown in the book, but students will have to research others. Hang students' paintings as an Everglades Animals border around the classroom. Instruct students to be prepared to tell the class something about the animals they painted.
3. Recall with students that Ms. Stone showed her class a book of paintings by the naturalist John James Audubon. Suggest that students do research to find examples of his paintings, especially of wildlife that is found in the Everglades.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Trish Marx is the author of several award-winning nonfiction books for children. She has worked with Cindy Karp, a photojournalist, on several other projects, including *One Boy From Kosovo*, winner of a Parents' Choice Award. Marx has a background in journalism and also teaches writing for children at Marymount Manhattan College. She lives in New York City.

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Cindy Karp lives in Miami, Florida, and has been a frequent visitor to the Everglades. She is a photojournalist who has covered political and environmental issues, human interest stories, and breaking news. She currently contributes as a freelance photographer to *The New York Times* and other publications.

Everglades Forever is Marx and Karp's fourth collaboration. The book has been praised by *School Library Journal* as "a great way to encourage environmental awareness and responsibility in children, and a fun way to begin to explore the wetlands." W. Hodding Carter, author of *Stolen Water: Saving the Everglades from its Friends, Foes and Florida*, commented, "Trish Marx has woven the beauty, importance and silence of the Everglades into a single book for young readers—a seemingly impossible task. If we truly want this unique ecosystem to be restored to its former grandeur, *Everglades Forever* should be required reading not only in Florida, but throughout the U.S., for children and their parents."

RESOURCES ON THE WEB

Learn more about *Everglades Forever*:

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/48/hc/everglades_forever_restoring_america_s_great_wetland

BookTalk with Trish Marx about *Everglades Forever*:

<http://www.leeandlow.com/p/marx.mhtml>

Other books by Trish Marx:

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/111/hc/steel_drumming_at_the_apollo_the_road_to_super_top_dog

BookTalk with Trish Marx about *Steel Drumming at the Apollo*:

<http://www.leeandlow.com/p/marx-senisi.mhtml>

View other **Active Reader Classroom Guides** at:

<http://www.leeandlow.com/p/teachers-multiethnic.mhtml>

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http://www.leeandlow.com/books/48/hc/everglades_forever_restoring_america_s_gr eat_wetland (secure on-line ordering)

<http://www.leeandlow.com/p/ordering.mhtml> (general order information)

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Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue, NY NY 10016

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