

Grade 5 English Language Arts
Week of November 9 – November 13

Lesson 3: Exploring Genres – Earth Game

Short Story Samples

You will work through a small sampling of stories from different genres. Answer the questions and do exercises as you read the stories. Enjoy!

Earth Game – by Pam Conrad



Not very long ago, in a meadow not too far from here, some children found a ball of twine lying in the grass.

“Watch me,” called the oldest girl. And she tied the end of the string to her finger and tossed the ball in the air.

Her brother caught it and wrapped the string around his own finger. Then he pitched it across to his friend. The twine unwound just enough as it sailed through the air. His friend caught the ball, wrapped the string around his thumb, and threw it over to someone else.

After many tosses back and forth, the ball had unwound to just a loose end, and the smallest child wound that around his finger. And there they were, joined in a circle by the twine that wove a net at their center.

“Now look,” said the oldest girl, and she wiggled her finger.

“I felt that!” said her brother.

“So did I,” said his friend.

And standing very still, one by one, they each wiggled a finger until they could feel the twine move with even the gentlest tug.

“Now, let’s be the Earth,” said the girl. She closed her eyes, and her voice lifted over the meadow. “I am a jungle in Africa, and someone is shooting an elephant for his tusks.” She moved her finger. They all felt the tug and grew sad.

"I'm the Arctic Ocean," said her brother, "and an oil tanker is hitting an iceberg and spilling oil over me. Soon all the birds will be black and slick and won't fly anymore." He tugged, and they were silent.

"I am a big city, and no one can see the stars in the sky because the air is thick with smoke and fumes from my factories." The gentle tug passed around them.

"I was once a farm, but the sunflowers and rows of corn are gone. Today I am a mall." They each felt the sad tug.

They stopped tugging. It was as though a thick cloud had passed before the sun and darkened their day. It was very still, except for a bird whizzing by over their heads.

Then the smallest boy smiled. He moved his finger. "I'm a town, and in a backyard somebody's putting out seed for the winter birds." He tugged again, and their faces lit up.

"Yes!" The tallest girl raised her hands, and the pull was felt by all. "I'm a highway, and people are walking alongside me, picking up bottles and cans for recycling." She wiggled her fingers and laughed and they could all feel it.

"I'm a neighborhood, and people are planting trees along my concrete sidewalks."

"I am an ocean, and fishermen are freeing the dolphins from their nets."

"I'm a herd of wild mustangs, and someone has given me land and turned me loose."

"I'm a lonely country road, and somebody's painting my mailbox red."

They all laughed. Then they raised their hands, lifting the net of twine higher and higher. They could feel the certain pull of all the things people could do to make a better world.

And that is how—not too long ago, in a meadow not very far from here—a ball of twine was the beginning of the Earth game.

"The Earth Game," by Pam Conrad. From *The Big Book of Our Planet*, edited by Anne Durell, et. al. ©1993 by Dutton Children's Books. pp. 55–56, 58–59.

Directions: Answer the questions below in full sentences. Remember to explain your ideas with examples and evidence from the text! Also proofread your writing after you finish.

1. What did the children first do when they found the ball of twine?

1. Write the sentence the word is in and underline the word.
2. Based on the information there is around this word, give your best guess about what this word means.
3. Look the word up in the dictionary and write down the definition.

1. a) Word: _____

b) Sentence:

c) Guess the meaning:

d) Definition:

2. a) Word: _____

b) Sentence:

c) Guess the meaning:

d) Definition:

3. a) Word: _____

b) Sentence:

c) Guess the meaning:

d) Definition:

The Earth Game Reflection

Directions: Choose one of these questions to respond to in a thoughtful response. Use full sentences and paragraph format. Give examples (cite evidence) from the story to back your points.

a) Why do you think the author wrote this story? What do you think she wants people who read it to do?

b) If the story continued, what do you think the children would do? Write about what you think would happen after the children played this game.

c) How are you involved in the Earth Game in your daily life? What things do you do that are good and bad for the environment?