



A Sense of Wonder

An experiment in gathering, arranging, and sharing.
Read these excerpts, respond, and get ready to explore.

A child's world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement. It is our misfortune that for most of us that clear-eyed vision, that true instinct for what is beautiful and awe-inspiring, is dimmed and even lost before we reach adulthood. If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, as an unfailing antidote against the boredom and disenchantments of later years, the sterile preoccupation with things that are artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength.

If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder without any such gift from the fairies, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in. Parents often have a sense of inadequacy when confronted on the one hand with the eager, sensitive mind of a child and on the other with a world of complex physical nature, inhabited by a life so various and unfamiliar that it seems hopeless to reduce it to order and knowledge. In a mood of self-defeat, they exclaim, "How can I possibly teach my child about nature — why, I don't even know one bird from another!"

I sincerely believe... it is not half so important to *know* as to *feel*. If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and the impressions of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seeds must grow. The years of early childhood are the time to prepare the soil. Once the emotions have been aroused — a sense of the beautiful, the excitement of the new and the unknown, a feeling of sympathy, pity, admiration or love — then we wish for knowledge about the object of our emotional response. Once found, it has lasting meaning. It is more important to pave the way for the child to want to know than to put him on a diet of facts he is not ready to assimilate.

From *The Sense of Wonder*, by Rachel L. Carson, copyright 1956.

"Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature — the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter."



"Only within the moment of time represented by the present century has one species — man — acquired significant power to alter the nature of the world. "

"Those who dwell, as scientists or laymen, among the beauties and mysteries of the earth, are never alone or weary of life."

"The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for destruction."

"But man is a part of nature, and his war against nature is inevitably a war against himself."

"For the sense of smell, almost more than any other, has the power to recall memories and it's a pity we use it so little."

"The question is whether any civilization can wage relentless war on life without destroying itself, and without losing the right to be called civilized."

"The 'control of nature' is a phrase conceived in arrogance, born of the Neanderthal age of biology and philosophy, when it was supposed that nature exists for the convenience of man."

"It is a wholesome and necessary thing for us to turn again to the earth and in the contemplation of her beauties to know the sense of wonder and humility. "

"The edge of the sea is a strange and beautiful place."

"In every outthrust headland, in every curving beach, in every grain of sand there is the story of the earth."

"The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for destruction"

Internet Exploration Assignment
You may focus on Information, Images, Inspiration.

Start with Rachel Carson. Find out why she is so important and relate some of her beliefs and activities to something you can care about. Decide on how to present your findings in a powerful but brief sharing session.

- ✚ Perhaps you will discover a movie clip or something that you can download from a website to share.
- ✚ Perhaps you will make a power point slide show or a movie.
- ✚ Perhaps you will produce a found poem or collage or illuminated text...or an original poem (see page 3)
- ✚ Perhaps you want to share the gist of significant books she has written.
- ✚ Perhaps you will focus on more scientific commentary about preserving our planet.
- ✚ Perhaps you'll share your personal sense of wonder as you explore the wonders of nature.

The door is open to you. The goal is for us to see at least 10 different presentations that let us into the life and soul and achievements of this remarkable woman. Sign up for your idea as soon as you decide.

Barter

Life has loveliness to sell,
All beautiful and splendid things,
Blue waves whitened on a cliff,
Soaring fire that sways and sings,
And children's faces looking up,
Holding wonder like a cup.

Life has loveliness to sell,
Music like the curve of gold,
Scent of pine trees in the rain,
Eyes that love you, arms that hold,
And for your spirit's still delight,
Holy thoughts that star the night.

Spend all you have for loveliness,
Buy it and never count the cost;
For one white singing hour of peace
Count many a year of strife well lost,
And for a breath of ecstasy
Give all you have been, or could be.

Sara Teasdale



Fueled

Fueled
by a million
man-made
wings of fire—
the rocket tore a tunnel
through the sky—
and everybody cheered
Fueled
only by a thought from God
the seedling
urged its way
through thicknesses of black
and as it pierced
the heavy ceiling of the
soil—
and launched itself
up into outer space—
no
one
even
clapped

~Marcie Hans

Disorder

Contorted tree trunks twist
and tangle
reaching in all directions
for a sky paled by watery clouds
white ink spilled over
periwinkle canvas;
Moss rests snugly in
moist folds of wrinkled bark
This world bathes
in pink morning sunlight
drowns in radiant magma,
humble rocks, rusty benches
are beautiful
The glorious morning sky
framed by rectangles of glass and metal
is beautiful,
And I have not paid attention to your lesson.
I would have liked to.

Please
tell me
as you were driving to this concrete box
did you once look up from your
steaming black water
to spy the awesome rosy world
pouring over the horizon?
Did you notice the morning?
Forgive me. Again I
have digressed
Wasting precious time.

~Emily Hicks (student)

