



BOOK GUIDE FOR ***Bringing the Beach Home***

Written by Laura Atkins
Illustrated by Evgenia Penman



SUMMARY

In *Bringing the Beach Home*, Rowan is tired of the back-and-forth between Mom's and Dad's houses—until a special day at the beach with Dad sparks something magical. Initially overwhelmed by the crashing waves and blaring sun, Rowan soon finds peace by tuning into nature and using creativity to connect to a sense of home. After they head back, Rowan and Dad craft a wind chime from seashells, a stick, and some pebbles, bringing the magic of the beach back with them.

This touching story highlights the power of nature, creativity, and family bonds in navigating transitions like moving between homes. Rowan's story speaks to all families, offering an empowering message of resilience and connection for children coping with life's changes. With lush illustrations and a message that resonates with readers of all ages, this book shows that we can always find a way to hold onto what matters most.



About the Author

Laura Atkins is a children's book author, editor, and creativity coach, with over thirty years in the children's book world. She also collects sea glass and creates sculptures and mobiles from shells, pebbles and driftwood. Laura has loved the beach all her life, especially the Bay Area beaches near her Berkeley, California home. She is the co-author of the first two books in the Fighting for Justice series for middle grade readers, *Fred Korematsu Speaks Up* and *Biddy Mason Speaks Up*, co-author of the call-to-action picture book, *Calling All Future Voters!* and author of the light-hearted picture book, *Sled Dog Dachshund*.



About the Illustrator

Evgenia Penman is a children's book illustrator based in the UK, with roots in Kazakhstan. Her journey began as a graphic designer, where she learned to harness the power of visuals. After serving as an art director in an international advertising agency, she recognized that her true passion lay in storytelling through illustration. This summer, she participated in the Advanced Track at the Picturebook Summer School in Cambridge, pushing the boundaries of her craft. Evgenia is dedicated to creating heartwarming stories that resonate with both young readers and their parents, believing that every book can inspire imagination and foster joy.

STEP 1: CONNECT TO NATURE

THE ORIGINAL CREATIVE FORCE

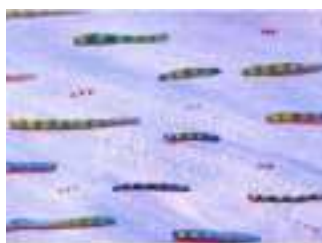
Nature is our creative teacher! The natural world flows, is flexible, and responds to what happens all the time.

- * Caterpillars become butterflies, with all the colors and shapes you can imagine.
- * Willows can survive and thrive even when they are flooded!
- * Rainbows are one of nature's amazing creations. All those colors!

When we connect to nature, we connect with creative flow. There's no right or wrong way. Do you think birds worry about how their nests look? Do they think, "That one is better than mine?" Nope! They create and let the process flow through them.

Maybe you already have ways you like to connect to nature: stomping in puddles after it rains, smelling flowers in your neighborhood, climbing trees and rubbing your fingers on bumpy tree bark, watching or listening to birds... Take a moment and think about how YOU love to connect to the natural world. Write it down, and draw a picture if you want as well!

I made these cards with ideas for connecting to nature, and added my own art. You can try these ideas out, and then come back and play with crayons, pens, paints ... whatever seems fun. See how nature's inspiration comes through you to make your own nature-inspired art. And if you want, you can make and decorate your own cards like these!



Animal Friends

Animals don't worry about how their fur looks or compare their nests. Spend some time with an animal. If you have a pet, great! Or find a bird, an ant, or any animal that you can be with for a while. What do you notice?



Be a Tree

Find or think of a tree and imagine yourself as that tree. Your feet could be the roots, your legs and torso the trunk, your arms and head the branches, and your fingers the leaves. Spend some time just being a tree.



Wander

Go outside and let your body take you in a direction - with an adult if needed. Follow your heart. Are you led by some colorful flowers? A wonderful smell? See where you go and what inspires you.

STEP 1 CONTINUED

STEP 2: GET CREATIVE!

THERE'S NO RIGHT WAY TO CREATE

We often focus a lot on what people make when they are creative. But really, the process of making is where the magic happens. Being creative is connecting to nature and to yourself.

Sometimes we hear a voice, either from outside or even in our own heads, that can stop our creativity. The voice can say something isn't "good" enough. Or some else's is "better."

There are some things we can do to quiet these kinds of voices, and step into our creative magic:

- * Take some deep breaths and try to listen to your calm inner voice—the voice that says it's OK to try and play, and that all that we create is magical.
- * Step away and take a break. Maybe play a game. See if you can do something that makes you laugh. We don't hear those mean voices when we are laughing.
- * When you come back, give yourself permission just to play and experiment.
- * Allow your creation to change and shift into something else. Maybe you have heard of a "happy accident." That's where some of the magic is, when we don't even know where we are going or what we are going to create!

Now it's your turn. Here are two ideas:

At Home

Find six objects around your house and put them in front of you. Do they make you think of something to create? A song, a play, a story, a drawing, or a sculpture? Try something out! Then try something else. Have fun and just let yourself flow.

Outside

Take a wander. Notice things that catch your attention—especially things in nature. Do you see flowers, sticks, feathers, birds, plants, clouds? Collect some things as you wander (make sure they are OK to collect, like sticks, leaves, and feathers on the ground. People don't like it if we pick flowers from their gardens!). When you get home, use these things as inspiration to make your own creation. Maybe create a picture from the objects and keep them on a table or shelf to remind you of your wander. Or you could be like Rowan and try to make a windchime or mobile. Just let yourself play!

There are as many ways to create as there are things to make.

STEP 3: TAKING THINGS FURTHER EXPANDING OUR CREATIVE CONNECTION

What can we learn from Rowan's experience in *Bringing the Beach Home*? Our lives change when we open up, connect to nature, and create.

My Dad inspired me to write this book. When I was young, he used to take me and my brother to the beach. We always collected items from the shore, and he even buried us in the sand! Here's my brother in the sand with me behind him.



I remember my dad asking us to collect shells with holes in them. And he made a windchime! I thought this was amazing.



I now collect things wherever I go. I found a beach near me where I found SO MUCH sea glass! I love finding shells, pieces of pottery, interesting sticks, pebbles, and more. As I started to collect and then create, I noticed that I started to SEE more creatively. Then I tried different things. I made sun catchers, I collected succulent plants and made a little garden, I found a small metal bedframe on the street and turned that into a sculpture. I learned how to make wire trees from researching on the internet and then looking at trees for inspiration...

STEP 3 CONTINUED

How I Did It and Some Things I Learned

While there aren't rules or right ways to create, I thought you might want some tips on how I learned along the way. Here's what happened when I made the wind chime that the artist Evgenia used as the inspiration for the wind chime in *Bringing the Beach Home*.

1. To make the wind chime, I started by gathering my materials.



I had sticks, pebbles, shells, sea glass, fishing line, scissors, and some quick-drying glue.

2. Then I started to play with tying, glueing and dangling shells and pebbles. I found that fishing line was handy because it's easy to tie tightly. But it's hard to see and can be fiddly!



Shells with holes were the easiest to tie and dangle!

STEP 3 CONTINUED

How I Did It and Some Things I Learned

3. Pebbles were hard! Anything round was tricky to tie. So I played with wrapping fishing line around a pebble and using glue to hold it in place. This worked pretty well with quick-drying glue—you may need a grown up to help. What I eventually learned was that wrapping with wire makes things much easier! I found tips for how to do this online, and now I wrap anything without a hole and leave a loop at the top to tie the fishing wire.



Here's an example with glue



Here's an example with wire wrapping

STEP 3 CONTINUED

How I Did It and Some Things I Learned

4. I kept playing and experimenting. I didn't worry about it being perfect. And in the end I made ... a wind chime!



You can even see a video with the beach things moving here: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/zjHs3oU6nRrh3DMf8>

5. My wind chime barely goes clinkety clank like Rowan's does. It mostly makes noise when it's really windy. That's OK! I still love how the wind chime reminds me of going to the beach, and then the fun of making it. I've experimented with different shapes. I used sticks, like in the book. I also bought a hoop and used that, because that was the shape my dad used (he took a flexible stick and made it into a circle).

You can try any shape or method that you want. Even if it doesn't turn out how you had planned, maybe you found something unexpected, you learned, and had fun along the way!

You can see lots of examples of things I've made on this website (<https://manzanitaartisanry.weebly.com/>). And I'd love to see what you make! Please share your creation, any creation, with me at laura@lauraatkins.com.



OTHER WAYS TO BE CREATIVE

YOUR OWN AMAZING SELF

Did you notice that in the book, I didn't use "he" or "she" for Rowan? I just used the name "Rowan" throughout. If Rowan DID use pronouns, they would probably use "they" and "them."

Sometimes people and places around us tell us there are "right" ways to be boys and girls, and that those are the only two choices. The same way we can get the message there are "right" ways to create.

In nature, animals don't think of themselves as "he" or "she" or have ideas about how they should look or act. They just are, with themselves and with each other.

Now it's your turn:

Draw and Create Your Self

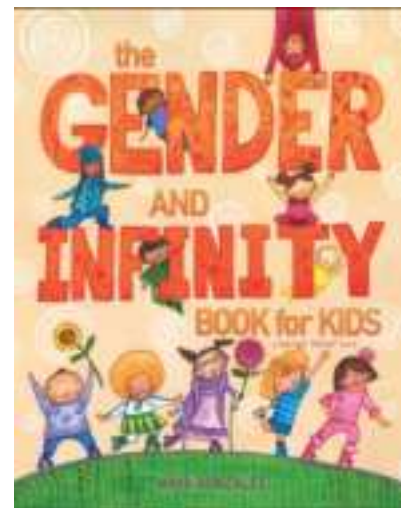
Draw a picture of YOU. If you want, you can start with an outline (but remember, there's no right way to create!)

Now add stuff! Concoct cool clothes with patterns and colors that you love. Maybe you're inspired by some of the nature things you saw when you wandered. Play with your hairstyle—it can be any shape and color you want! You can glue items onto the picture. Let yourself be as free as nature to reflect your own wonderful self.

Some great resources here:



No One Owns the Colors
(Collective Book Studio):
<https://thecollectivebook.studio/products/no-one-owns-the-colors>



The Gender and Infinity Book
(Reflection Press):
<https://reflectionpress.com/our-books/the-gender-infinity-book-for-kids/>

CREATIVITY AND EMOTIONAL CHANGE

Maybe you move between houses, like Rowan. Or you had to move away from somewhere you lived and leave friends or loved ones behind. Maybe you've had a hard time with friends. Or you've felt sad, lonely, happy, or quiet.

Creativity can help us to express and work through our feelings. My son likes to write songs when he's sad or mad. I engrave sticks and paint abstract pictures when I feel worried. I also take walks and spend time with birds and plants.

Feelings can be big. Sometimes when we get overwhelmed, we can melt down or hide away from the world. Writing, drawing, singing, cooking and SO MUCH MORE are all ways we can deal with difficult emotions. When we create, and are able to express our feelings, we can feel lighter, and jump back into life and our connections with other people.

Rowan finds a sense of home at the beach, and brings that home by making the windchime. They find resilience inside, and so can take that wherever they go. We all have the power to find our own resilience, creativity, and sense of home—and be part of nature's flow.

Create With Your Emotions

- * How are you feeling right now? Sit with yourself and just feel the feeling.
- * Then find a color that shows this feeling. Don't worry about what it looks like, just go with your first choice.
- * Does your feeling have a shape that you can draw? Try it out!
- * You can move your body and see how that emotion comes through you.
- * You can even dance your feeling, or act it out!
- * To take this further, you can make a play about someone who feels that feeling, and how they express it.
- * Is there something in nature that would help you with your feeling? Draw a picture of yourself with or in that natural place.

Creating with our emotions can give us comfort, and make those feelings not feel stuck inside. When we create with our emotions, we let them move through our bodies and then can let them go.

