Fall 2006

Something Fishy: Cultivating Children’s Sense of Place Through Literature

Anne Rone
SIT Study Abroad

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/ISP

Part of the Curriculum and Instruction Commons, and the Environmental Sciences Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/301

This Unpublished Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the SIT Study Abroad at SIT Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection by an authorized administrator of SIT Digital Collections. For more information, please contact digitalcollections@sit.edu.
Something Fishy:

Cultivating Children’s Sense of Place Through Literature

Rone, Anne
Furman University
Department of Sociology
Academic Director: Brennan, Peter
Advisor: Brennan, Peter
Research Conducted in Sydney, Australia

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Australia: Sustainability and the Environment, SIT Study Abroad, Fall 2006
Acknowledgments

First of all, I would like to thank our Academic Director and my advisor, Peter Brennan, for supporting my project from the beginning. Thank you for your enthusiasm and being there for me.

I am truly indebted to Glen Halliday at Observatory Hill Environmental Education Center for all the time and energy you invested in my project. You were like an advisor to me and for that I am very grateful. I especially appreciate your insight and all of the materials you allowed me to borrow.

Thank you to Wendy Goldstein at Macquarie University’s Graduate School of the Environment for all of the wonderful information about environmental education that you directed me to.

Thank you Barby Pilcher in the environmental education center at Taronga Zoo. You provided a wonderful introduction to environmental education in Sydney. Also thank you to those on your staff at the center who took me under their wing and allowed me to tag along with their classes:

Michelle Lindsay
Paul Maguire
David Smith

Also a huge thanks to Rochelle Bishop and Paul Sinclair at the Zoo’s Backyard to Bush for allowing me to observe your programs.

I am grateful for the insight and opportunity to speak with John Johnstone at Sydney Olympic Park’s Field Studies Center. You were so welcoming and willing to share your knowledge. I instantly felt right at home. Also a huge thank you to the rest of the staff and especially Katrina for allowing me to help out with her excursion. I was really impressed with the way you handled that class!

I would like to thank all of the teachers and classes that allowed me to observe them as well as the staff at the New South Wales State Library for helping me find the research I needed.

Finally, I’d like to thank my parents for supporting me throughout this process and all of the ladies who stayed with me in Sydney. You kept me going!
Abstract

Environmental Education (EE) has become increasingly important in Australian public and governmental discourse in the past decade. In its most recent national environmental education statement (2005: 7) the Department of Environment and Heritage lays out a new model of sustainability education that is “about,” “in,” and “for” the environment. This governmental framework includes variety of programs for school children in and out of the classroom.

Within the realm of EE, sense of place has re-emerged as an important issue. The study of place fosters a sense of wonder and appreciation for the environment in children and leads to concrete, transformative action later in life (Wilson 1997). Among the range of techniques used to teach environmental education issues, storytelling can be powerful because it allows people to share ideas and helps students make meaning out of their surroundings.

Given the importance of environmental education and, more importantly, sense of place in education, as well as the usefulness of literature to teach environmental topics, the goal of this project is to create a storybook about sense of place for children ages six to eight. The book will not only entertain children but inspire them to connect with and think about their own community as well.

Four methods were used to collect the information necessary to write the children’s book: analysis of theoretical writings on sense of place, qualitative content analysis, participant observation of environmental education centers’ (EECs) programs and research on how to write a children’s book. The last week of data collection was spent creating, writing and developing a layout for the final book.

Content analysis and participant observation reveal the issues discussed most frequently with primary school children as: Australian native species, life cycles, invasive species, conservation, Aboriginal use of the land, change and growth, respect for culture and wonder and discovery of nature. The most common techniques used by educators and authors to convey environmental issues are repetition, metaphor, descriptive language, facts, unusual names/words, suspense and the use of all the senses. Furthermore, research on sense of place reveals that it involves the relationship between a person and their beliefs and actions and the built and natural environment around them.

The final product, “Something Fishy” uses characters and techniques similar to those found in the books reviewed for the content analysis. However, the setting and approach to sense of place are somewhat different, with “Something Fishy” emphasizing community and relationships rather than the natural environment.

Topic Codes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic Code</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Education</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary Education</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature: General</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.0 Introduction

Environmental Education (EE) has become increasingly important in Australian public and governmental discourse in the past decade. National and local governments in particular emphasize the formalization of an environmental education agenda in communities and schools because “environmental education can help the community to make informed decisions and to act effectively in addressing environmental…issues (NSW Environmental Protection Authority 1996:6)

1.1 Overview of Environmental Education Programs in Australia

On a national level, environmental education has been incorporated into the school curriculum for over 30 years. An intergovernmental conference in 1977 stated the three goals of environmental education as (1) awareness and concern for the environment, (2) the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes and skills needed to protect the environment and (3) creating new patterns of behavior toward the environment (Department of the Environment and Heritage 2005). However, over the years, the government’s approach to EE has become more holistic and comprehensive. The Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH), which coordinates most national-level EE initiatives in Australia, has now adopted the concept of sustainability to describe the new direction of EE.

In its most recent national environmental education statement (2005: 7) the DEH lays out a new model of sustainability education that is “about,” “in,” and “for” the environment. This most recent approach to education for sustainability involves every aspect of the school from the people to the curriculum and the physical environment, with the idea that each facet of the school should work together to be sustainable.
Within this framework of sustainability education, the DEH established the Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative (AuSSI) with the vision that “all Australian schools and their communities…be sustainable” (Department of the Environment and Heritage, 2006). This joint effort between national and local governments aims at implementing a whole school approach to sustainability through real-life learning experiences and school resource management that involves both students and administrators. Currently 2000 schools in Australia participate in this program, which provides tools, curriculum support and ideas for community involvement.

On a local level, New South Wales (NSW) has been a leader in EE policy. Its EE plan for 2002 –2005 includes many of the same objectives as the national programs such as sustainable schools and a holistic approach to EE. It also outlines other initiatives that involve more than just schools such as regional salinity education, community education campaigns like “Out Environment: It’s a Living Thing!” and increased Aboriginal voices about environmental issues, particularly biodiversity and National Parks management.

It is important to note that the government also offers opportunities for children to learn outside the classroom through environmental education centers (EECs) and field studies centers (FSCs). Both EECs and FSCs are experiential learning facilities that teach children in years k-12 skills that cannot be taught inside a classroom. Also, they both focus on the Department of Education and Training (DET) curriculum outcomes, as public school field trips must be curriculum related. The key difference between EECs and FSCs is that field studies centers do not necessarily teach environmental concepts.

While mandatory national and state sustainability policies for schools are a step in the right direction, Taylor, Nathan and Coll (2003) point out that only 70
percent of students in Australia attend government schools where these policies have been instituted. This raises the issue of whether or not non-government schools are teaching their students the same issues about the environment or if one system has more comprehensive EE programs than the other.

1.2 The Importance of Sense of Place in Environmental Education

Among the wide variety of topics explored in environmental education, sense of place has re-emerged as an important issue, although it is not a new concept. In 1897, John Dewey proposed the study of place as a remedy for the overspecialisation of formal education. Then again in the 1940’s Lewis Mumford suggested that place be the backbone of education in his proposal of a “regional survey” (Cited in Orr 1992:128). His vision was for people to explore the place where they live from the time they were infants such that their knowledge would grow and mature as they did.

More recently, David Orr (1994) argues that ecologically literate, place-oriented people are more likely to be environmentally friendly and play a role in conserving natural resources than those who are not. He advocates incorporating place into all school curricula because place is tangible and requires that students use their classroom knowledge in a direct, experiential way (Orr 1992). It also requires that students cooperate with their communities as well as across disciplines.

Ultimately, the study of place fosters a sense of wonder and appreciation for the environment in children and adults alike (Wilson 1997). It leads to concrete, transformative action by raising people’s awareness of the environment around them and inspiring them to act on its behalf.
1.3 **Literature as a Tool for Teaching Environmental Issues**

While educators use a range of techniques to teach environmental education issues, Collins and Cooper (1997:2) explain that storytelling can be a “powerful teaching tool” because it allows people to share ideas and understandings and helps students make meaning out of their surroundings. It furthermore “pervades all aspects of learning” in that any discipline can use storytelling to convey a message (Collins et al 1997:3). Storytelling is a form of indirect instruction because it uses concrete examples, encourages questions and discussion and makes learning fun (Collins et al 1997). Thus, using stories to teach shows children concepts and ideas rather than simply telling them what to think.

Stories also help develop critical thinking skills by forcing students to draw their own conclusions and analyze their own experiences within the framework of the story. Because stories reflect human experiences, they allow children to apply the lessons they learn through them and in that way begin to make sense of their surroundings (Collins et al 1997, Lion, Outhred and Farrell 1999).

Christenson (2004) also agrees that the use of environmental literature in the classroom can be beneficial for both students and teachers. All five of the elementary school teachers she interviewed for her study found environmental literature valuable as a teaching tool. They noted that using environmental literature in the classroom exposes students to environmental vocabulary, which they are able to then use to express their views about nature.

Lion et al (1999) further emphasizes the use of literature as a starting point for discussion in the classroom or at home. While their study did not find that reading environmental literature alone increased students’ awareness of the environment, when the reading was accompanied by teacher-led discussion and interpretation, the
students began to understand the concepts better than if they had just discussed them without the literature.

1.4 Statement of Problem

Given the importance of environmental education and, more importantly, sense of place in education, as well as the usefulness of literature to teach environmental topics, the goal of this project is to create a storybook about sense of place for children ages six to eight. The book will not only entertain children but inspire them to connect with and think about their own community as well.

This endeavour is particularly important because children need to begin their connection with their environment early so that they become responsible, caring citizens later in life. Cultivating a sense of place is an ideal way to connect children with their surroundings because it gives them tangible examples of how to connect with and relate to the built and natural environment. In fact, David Orr (1992:146) argues that environmental education should emphasize “place-specific knowledge and skills” because they aid in building local communities.

Furthermore, a book offers the opportunity to convey a message, such as getting to know the place you live, in an entertaining and informal way. It is perhaps more likely that a wider variety of children would be exposed to and receptive of ideas about place in this format because the learning is incorporated into their leisure time and is not restricted to the classroom.

2.0 Methodology

Over the course of one month (November 5th - December 3rd), four methods were used to collect the information necessary to write the children’s book: analysis of theoretical writings on sense of place, qualitative content analysis, participant observation of environmental education centers’ (EECs) programs and research on
how to write a children’s book. Each method was conducted over the course of a
week beginning with sense of place, followed by the content analysis, the observation
at the centers and researching children’s book writing. The last week of data
collection was spent creating, writing and developing a layout for the final book.

2.1 Theoretical Writings on Sense of Place

Theoretical writings about sense of place were found through the New South
Wales State Library as well as the Fischer Research Library at the University of
Sydney. A simple keyword search for “sense of place” was conducted in the libraries’
databases and books were then sought out and reviewed. Several authors, such as Fritz
Steele, were frequently cited in other works on sense of place and thus these works
were specifically searched for. Additionally, an Internet search was conducted to find
any websites or other works that discussed sense of place.

For each work, key words, diagrams and definitions were recorded in order to
discover the elements of sense of place. That is, the purpose of researching sense of
place was to find out what sense of place means and how it is defined. Once each
work was reviewed, a list of components of sense of place was generated for book-
writing reference.

2.2 Qualitative Content Analysis of Children’s Books on Sense of Place

2.2.1 How and Why the Books Were Chosen

A convenience sample of 21 books were found for the content analysis using
three annotated bibliographies of children’s environmental literature:

- Wisconsin’s Department of Natural Resources Children’s
  Environmental Literature Bibliography
- E for Environment: An Annotated Bibliography of Children’s Books
  with Environmental Themes
- Childsake’s Environmental Children’s Book List Online
For a complete list of the book titles and authors, please see Appendix A. The complete sources are listed in the bibliography.

Each bibliography was read to determine if it addressed sense of place in any way and then added to a list of books to be looked for in state, university and local libraries (including the Haymarket, Customs House and Ultimo branches of the City of Sydney library system). Although these lists provided a starting point, it was difficult to track down the books on the list, as many were not available. The rest of the books were found by browsing the shelves of the city libraries. The titles were evaluated first and then the book was briefly read to determine if it was appropriate.

Books were chosen as the researcher’s discretion using the resources available in Sydney. Below is a list of the criteria for choosing each book. It is important to note that books did not have to meet all the criteria to be chosen. These are simply some of the characteristics that help narrow down the enormous selection of books:

- A specific location or town
- Community
- Wonder of nature
- Award-winning or notable book
- Strong conservation message
- Belonging

Not all of the books chosen were about sense of place but all either included place or another environmental theme, preferably both.

2.2.2 Qualitative Content Analysis Theory

Originally, traditional content analysis was chosen to analyse children’s books relating to sense of place. Through this method categories are developed and then searched for within the data, in this case the books. However, after researching content analysis at the University of Sydney library, it was decided that inductive, rather than the traditional deductive analysis would suit the project aims much better.
Qualitative, or ethnographic content analysis, requires that the researcher take categories from the data itself rather than developing categories before analysing the data (Kellehere 1993, Bryman 2001). This reflective approach allows the researcher to collect and code data, develop concepts and then interpret more data with these new concepts such that the categories are constantly evolving.

2.2.3 Coding Methods

Six categories of information were initially developed for the content analysis: point of view, setting, characters, themes, key words and techniques. For each category, the first book that included a particular subcategory was written down and then each subsequent book was given a tally mark so that the total number of books that included a particular characteristic was counted. Thus, the types of information to look for were established prior to analysing the books, but the specific subcategories were developed from the data itself.

For each major category, except “keywords,” a list of every possible subcategory was recorded. The generated lists were then collapsed into broader, thematic categories for the purpose of analysis. The final lists were reviewed and taken into account when writing the book. For an example of the coding process for the category “setting,” see Appendix A.

2.3 Participant Observation of Environmental Education Center Programs in Sydney

In order to get a sense for how children were taught environmental issues, three government-run environmental education centers were visited at the following locations around Sydney: Taronga Zoo, Observatory Hills and Bicentennial Park. It is important to note that while the center at Bicentennial Park calls itself a field studies center, the program observed was an environmental program and will therefore, for
the sake of clarity, be referred to as an environmental education center. The goal of visiting these centers was to gain insight into the techniques teachers used to convey environmental issues to children and, therefore, observation was chosen as the research method. Furthermore, each center invited interaction with the children and participation in the programs as a “helper.”

2.3.1 How and Why the Environmental Education Centers Were Selected

EEC’s were chosen through an Internet search of environmental education in Sydney. A phone call was made to the contact person listed on each website and specific programs were chosen with the help of those contacts.

The EECs were chosen for several reasons. First, they were less complicated to access than public primary schools, which require signing forms and limited contact with children. However, it is common to find university students training at or observing at EEC’s and therefore the presence of a 21 year old was not out of the ordinary nor was it difficult to set up an appointment. Secondly, EEC’s focus on environmental and outdoor education. It made more sense to observe programs, which were geared toward the environment, rather than try and pick out environmental themes and elements in the traditional class room lecture. Finally, the EEC’s provided a wider range of excursions and resources to choose from than the traditional school which has many other focuses besides the environment.

2.3.2 Choosing the Right Programs to Observe

Each program was chosen with the help of a staff member at the respective education center. Each center recommended programs specifically for primary school children in years one to four, either on their website, as was the case with Observatory Hill, or through personal contact with a staff member. The programs were then narrowed down based on their subject matter and techniques used. Once the right
program was chosen, dates and times were agreed upon, depending on availability and scheduling.

In the case of Taronga Zoo, two programs were chosen for their use of story and role-play to teach children about the environment. The program, “Toys, Tales and Teatime,” at Observatory Hill was chosen for its emphasis on history and place, as well as its use of narratives to teach students. The program at Bicentennial Park was not specifically chosen but the director suggested a day when several year two classes would be visiting the EEC.

2.3.3 Recording Information

Notes were taken directly on site throughout the course of each program because it was not necessary to remain anonymous and all of the students, teachers and staff were aware that research was being conducted. Appendix B provides a summary of the observation questions and a description of the specific elements of the program that were observed in order to answer them.

2.4 Writing the Book

The book, “Something Fishy,” was hand written over the course of a week with brainstorming beginning a week before. A separate notebook was used for brainstorming ideas, pictures, sequence and layout before the final idea book or was created.

Given a lack of experience in writing children’s books, several books and website by notable authors were read and reviewed in order to get a sense of what elements were needed in the book. These writing resources were found in two ways: by searching the New South Wales State Library catalogue for “writing” and “children’s books” and looking up works by authors of books reviewed for the content analysis portion of this research. A particular emphasis was placed on how to write a
storybook (as opposed to a picture book) and notes were taken on everything from writing tips, to book length and page layout.

2.5 Limitations and Shortcomings

The collected writings on sense of place were limited to the resources found in public libraries. Many more books were identified than used for this analysis due to lack of availability online or from the local libraries. Ordering books was considered but rejected due to lack of time and money.

There were many opportunities for bias in the content analysis, due in part to the fact that the data was limited to publicly accessible books. Time was also an issue as only 21 books could be reviewed over the course of a week due to the considerable distance that had to be travelled to reach the appropriate libraries. There were also some possible coding issues because the data was only coded once and by only one person. Since coding is subjective, at least one additional coder would have been necessary to validate the categories developed from the data.

Finally, the main methodological issue with participant observation at environmental education centers is that so much happens verbally and visually that it is difficult to pay attention and take notes on every facet of the activity at once. Furthermore, the focus of the observation was on field techniques, but in retrospect, much more should have been recorded in detail such as the reactions of children, conversations between the children and between the children and their teachers while transitioning between lectures. Also observing these aspects more closely could have provided more insight into what would make a quality children’s book.
3.0 Results and Discussion of Children’s Book Research

In order to create an effective children’s book, it was first necessary to synthesize and analyze the sense of place theory, content analysis and participant observation at the EECs.

3.1 Environmental Issues Taught to Primary School Children in NSW

The programs and children’s books revealed the wide range of environmental topics that children in Australia are exposed to. Table 1 lists all of the topics covered by the programs and the literature. The topics with an asterisk (*) beside them were the themes most frequently found in both literature as well as in the programs I observed.

Table 1: Environmental Issues Discussed with Primary School Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature</th>
<th>Human Interaction with Environment</th>
<th>Place/History</th>
<th>Miscellaneous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classification of animals</td>
<td>*Conservation (of resources and wildlife)</td>
<td>History of The Rocks/How people lived in 1800’s</td>
<td>*Wonder and discovery of nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Australian native species</td>
<td>Growth and development</td>
<td>Home/community</td>
<td>Sharing nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Life cycles</td>
<td>Sustainable living</td>
<td>*Change/growth</td>
<td>Spirituality of nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wet and dry environments</td>
<td>*Aboriginal use of the land</td>
<td>*Respect for Australian and Aboriginal culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying insects</td>
<td>Resourcefulness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangrove forests</td>
<td>The built environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camouflage</td>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Invasive species</td>
<td>Destruction of nature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drought/water issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Emphasis was placed on distinctly Australian issues such as water shortage and conservation as well as invasive species and native Australian animals. For
example, at Targona Zoo, only Australian animals such as kangaroos were used to
demonstrate the various classifications of animals. Furthermore, an entire book by
Jeannie Baker has been devoted to the topic of the invasive species, rosy dock.
Cultivating respect for Aboriginal uses and ties to the land was also another popular
theme. Given that Australia’s environment is unique and often extreme, I am not
surprised to find that educators stress these issues.

Many of the other topics listed like conservation, resourcefulness and
sustainable living are a response to western issues such as development, resource
depletion and growth. Again, this is not surprising given that either American or
Australian authors wrote all of the books I reviewed.

Some of the topics above also relate directly to place such as history,
community, the change and growth of a place, and Australian and indigenous cultures.
Other topics such as classification, identifying species and the built environment also
play a role in cultivating a strong sense of place.

The NSW Board of Studies’ syllabus outcomes for Human Society and Its
Environment incorporates place into the curriculum for primary school students (up to
stage 3). It’s “Overview of Environment Outcomes” includes “patterns of place and
location” as well as “relationships with places” which include topics such as learning
about the interaction between people and the natural and built environments,
describing local places in Australia and their meaning and promoting positive ways of
influencing and interacting with the environment (New South Wales Board of Studies
2006:21).

These outcomes were manifested in all of the programs I observed at EECs.
For example, in “Toys, Tales and Teatime,” children learned how the Aborigines and
later the first settlers in Sydney related to and used their natural environment to
survive. Also, during the program at Bicentennial Park, children were taught about invasive species and what they could do to help solve the problem as well as how people used the built environment in the park.

3.2 Techniques for Teaching Primary School Children About the Environment

3.2.1 Techniques Employed by Environmental Education Centers’ Teachers

Educators at EECs employ a variety of verbal, interactive and visual techniques in order to convey environmental and place-related issues to their classes, which are summarized in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Techniques Outside the Classroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarcasm/jokes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive reinforcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique-sounding words and names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analogies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key words to listen for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exaggeration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivid Language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several of these techniques are particular to EEC teachers because of their non-traditional role. Through the use of excursions, costumes and props, these educators are able to provide children with unique experiences and show rather than simply tell children ideas and concepts. For example, during my visit to Observatory Hills, the teacher, Glen Haliday, took the kids to a historical home, Susannah Place, in order to teach them about how children at The Rocks (the first settled section of Sydney) lived in the 19th century. The children were able to “experience” life as a child in history and then play a game using what they learned from the museum.
Interestingly, most of the techniques listed above were used to hold children’s attention. Programs directors and schoolteachers alike repeatedly told me what a short attention span children have. Thus, EEC instructors used using props, exaggeration and humor to engage the students and techniques such as suspense, answering questions and listening for key words in order to hold the students’ attention. All of the lessons were very interactive as kids were constantly moved around, told to sit, stand, look and listen. This constant change of scenery and pace proved to work well to keep most children alert and engaged.

3.2.2 Techniques Employed by Children’s Book Authors

The results of the literary techniques used by children’s book authors are summarized in Table 3. The techniques with an asteric (*) beside them overlap with the techniques used at the EECs.

Many of the literary techniques are incorporated into books in order to grab a child’s attention. The use of rhyme, unusual names, messages in pictures, suspense, emotion and surprise all draw the reader in and make them want to read more.

Table 3: Techniques Used in Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linguistic</th>
<th>Visual</th>
<th>Miscellaneous</th>
<th>Point of View</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Repetition</td>
<td>Use of maps</td>
<td>*Suspense</td>
<td>Multiple perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Metaphors/analogies</td>
<td>Use of pictures to show change</td>
<td>Surprise</td>
<td>Child’s perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail</td>
<td>Varied layout</td>
<td>Emotion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhyming</td>
<td>Subtle messages</td>
<td>Reader involvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Texture/ collage</td>
<td>Author’s note</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Descriptive adjectives</td>
<td>Detail</td>
<td>*Using all the senses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Simple language</td>
<td>Conversation style</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliteration</td>
<td>Slang</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Incorporating facts</td>
<td>*Unusual names</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interestingly, many of the techniques used by EEC teachers are also used by authors, which suggests that these are especially effective ways of communicating with children. Repetition seems to be particularly important given children’s short attention span. In books especially, repetition of a particular phrase can help children identify a character who might say that phrase or a theme that the phrase implies.

Additionally, analogies were very popular with the children at the EEC’s and they are frequently used in children’s literature. They help children relate the concept being presented to concepts they are already familiar with which allows them to better understand what is being communicated. This is especially helpful with intangible subjects such as sense of place that cannot be physically shown, per say.

Most programs I observed and books I read used a mix of facts with fantasy or role-play. For example, during Taronga Zoo’s “Backyard to Bush” program, educators had the children dress up as insects to act out lifecycle events such as mating. Although the children were pretending to be bugs, they were also learning how bugs interact with one another. Similarly, many books encouraged children to use their imagination and place themselves in the shoes of the characters experiencing nature.

3.3 **Teaching Children Sense of Place**

3.3.1 **Elements of Place**

Generally, sense of place theorists tend to agree that place incorporates the following elements:

- Experiences/ person-place interaction
- Special feel or personality
- Identity and belonging
- History
- Community/ relationships
- Landmarks
- Habitation (fully involving oneself a place; not simply residing there)
- Built environment
Although there are many facets, sense of place can be thought of as essentially two components: the physical environment (which includes, the built and natural environment, its history and landmarks) and the person in that environment (which incorporates the idea of community, relationships, habitation and identity and belonging). These two components interact to create experiences and shape the values of the people and the place involved.

Steele (1981) explains sense of place as the interaction between a person and a place and the person’s reactions, feelings, perceptions and behaviours as a result of having experiences in that place. It depends not only on the characteristics of the place itself, therefore, but of the interests and identity of the person in that place (Buttimer 1980, Steele 1981, Tall 1993). Figure 1 models sense of place as a function of people and their environment.

**Figure 1: A Model of Sense of Place**

\[
\text{Environment} + \text{Person} = \text{Sense of Place}
\]

Physical Built Beliefs Behaviors

The theoretical as well as children’s literature suggest that sense of place is ultimately about relationships- with the natural and built environment, with other people and with oneself. Place is tied to one’s identity such that knowing and place well means knowing yourself (Orr 1992, Buttimer 1980, Godkin 1980, Seamon 1980).

3.3.2 **How Place is Conveyed in Children’s Literature**

The content analysis revealed a variety of ways in which authors incorporate place into children’s literature. The most popular method of conveying a sense of place is to show how a specific place, such as a city block, is changed and shaped over
time by the community. Sixteen of the books reviewed used this method including one by Australian author, Jeannie Baker. In her book, “Belonging,” (2004) the reader watches the birth of a community garden on an abandoned city block from a window across the street. You see the main character growing up as the space across the street is transformed into a community space over the character’s childhood.

Other authors focus on the meaning of home and/or community in order to convey a sense of place. For example, in Eve Bunting’s book, “Going Home,” (1996) the main character, Carlos, explains, “’Home is here…’” referring to his house in the U.S., “’But it is there, too,’” referring to his parent’s birthplace in Mexico. Bunting’s message is that “home” is not a physical place but where your family is.

Many of the books, especially those that cater to younger primary school children, tend to use a sense of wonder and the discovery of nature for the first time in order to connect children with their environment. This idea of exploring and a sense of awe capture the spirit of place and encourage children to explore their own surroundings.

4.0 Final Product: “Something Fishy”

Appendix C includes the text of the finished story, “Something Fishy.” A copy of the idea book complete with sketches and ideas for illustrations can be found in Appendix D, attached to this paper.

5.0 Reflection and Critique of “Something Fishy”

5.1 Creating an Effective Children’s Storybook

I chose to write a storybook because the focus would be on the words, not the pictures. Although I would have loved to illustrate the book, time and artistic ability would not allow such an endeavor. Because the text was the focus of my project, I paid careful attention to the language used in the books I reviewed and the advice
from authors about how to communicate with children. In particular, Jane Yolen (1983) emphasized that every word counts in a children’s book; concise writing is essential to a successful story. Additionally, Laura Brackes (2006) taught me the importance of an action-driven, fast-paced plot. Combining those two ideas, I attempted to use descriptive action words, much like what I have seen in the books I analyzed. I took cues from the linguistic techniques of the books and used the most vivid language I could think of while still trying to keep the syntax and sentence structure simple.

Brackes (2006) suggests using everyday language in new ways, which made me realize that my language does not have to be fancy or elaborate. However, I did not feel as though I could not use a few challenging words. In fact, my hope was that words such as “brawny” or “panoramic” would encourage children to ask questions or figure out the words in context. As I reflect, I almost wish I had used more challenging language so as to teach children new vocabulary.

5.2 Similarities and Differences with Reviewed Literature

I have constructed Table 4 to show the similarities and differences between my book and the 21 other books I reviewed for my content analysis. For each aspect of the book, I have made notes about my own work and the trends found in the books I analyzed.

By looking at these elements of “Something Fishy” along side the key elements from the content analysis books, it is clear that they have much in common. The mix of gender and age is quite similar as is the racial make-up, although I wanted to counter this by making Bernie, the cook, of a different ethnicity. Not surprisingly, the techniques used to create the book also overlap, as I took cues from the already published works in order to write my own.
Table 4: Comparison of Final Product to Reviewed Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>“Something Fishy”</th>
<th>Other Books Reviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A small town, on the coast</td>
<td>*2 books set in a small, coastal town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* Most set in the city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characters</td>
<td>*2 females, 2 males</td>
<td>* 50% in books male and 50% female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*A mix of children and adults,</td>
<td>* Slightly more kids than adults but generally mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>families</td>
<td>* Families common (1/3 of books)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*All white (Bernie could be of another ethnicity)</td>
<td>*2/3 of characters white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Child as main character</td>
<td>* About ½ have child as main character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Techniques</td>
<td>*Repetition</td>
<td>*Repetition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Alliteration</td>
<td>*Conversation style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Dialogue</td>
<td>*Unusual names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Slang</td>
<td>* Use of facts in story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Simple language</td>
<td>*Suspense/surprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Conversation style</td>
<td>*Author’s note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Unusual names</td>
<td>*Alliteration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Suspense/surprise</td>
<td>*Multiple perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Author’s note</td>
<td>*Lyrical language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Use of multiple senses</td>
<td>*Simple language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Reader involvement/reaction</td>
<td>*Detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Slang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Rhyming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Metaphor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Use of all the senses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* Reader involvement/reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>*Place/home/community</td>
<td>*Family and friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Travel/new places</td>
<td>*Home/community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Discovery/mystery</td>
<td>*Change/growth/lifecycles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Travel/migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Cultures (Australian and others)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* Human impact on the environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Caring for nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Wonder/discovery of nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective</td>
<td>3rd person, limited omniscience</td>
<td>* 12 books with 3rd person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* 9 books 1st person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* 1 book 2nd person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I especially liked Jeannie Baker’s use of an author’s note at the end of her works to further explain her message. In reading these notes, I felt they were a great point of discussion for children and their parents or teachers. They often encouraged readers to go beyond the book to look at similar issues in their own towns. I decided that this would be an appropriate way to get kids to act and begin to develop their own sense of place.

However, there are a few differences, mainly between the settings and in the thematic content. I was surprised to find that only two of the 21 books I reviewed were set in towns by the coast, especially given that 10 of the authors of the books I chose were Australian. I specifically chose to set the book in a beach town, taking inspiration from Byron Bay and Bondi Beach, because of this lack of books about sense of place set at the beach (although I have come across numerous books about creatures that live on the beach and in the ocean, mostly for kindergarten-aged children).

I was also surprised to find that while several books did use suspense, mystery was not a driving force for the book as it is in mine. The use of suspense and surprise was furthermore due to natural forces such as a sudden thunderstorm; natural forces typically created the drama.

Nature does not play as prominent a role in “Something Fishy” as in most of the reviewed books. I focused more on the idea of community and the relationships between the characters, especially those with Aunt Gina. Delilah’s discovery of Aunt Gina’s own sense of place is the climax of the book and therefore establishing Aunt Gina’s relationships with others was key.

There is a considerable library of books for children about the natural world, especially about animals and natural environments so I did not feel the need to make
this book an obviously environmental one. I like to think that the message is subtler and that as children begin to explore their own places, they will inevitably look at the natural as well as the cultural and built environments. Perhaps, though, there could have been a stronger environmental focus so as to push children in that direction.

5.3 **Difficulties and Challenges**

The chief difficulty I had in creating this book was reconciling my need to convey sense of place with writing a story that would entertain children. Yolen’s (1983) caution that authors are storytellers, not preachers, made me realize my book had to have a plot first and a message second. This proved particularly difficult for me because my original purpose was to convey a message. I now understand how much practice it takes to master the art of teaching and allowing the reader to discover the answers rather than telling them what to think. I do not feel that I fully accomplished this in my book because I think it is still a bit preachy.

That being said, I did create this book over the course of a week whereas, from what I have discovered, writing children’s books are perhaps the most difficult kind of writing. Children are very perceptive and require that you create a story that is creative and new but that still adheres to a simple and clear structure. You cannot leave undeveloped characters or loose ends in a children’s book. Everything must make sense while still being stimulating and provocative.

Another challenge I faced was my lack of experience with children. Although I love children, I baby-sit, I have read countless children’s books and I spent nearly three whole days with kids on my field study excursions, I still feel as though I do not know where children in year two or three are developmentally. I am not sure what language they know or how clever they are. I realize this changes from child to child but I have a feeling my book might be better suited for younger children, given that it
is relatively simple. I think I, and many adults that do not work with children regularly, do not realize how smart and advanced they can be.

Finally, it is difficult to evaluate your own work, especially when you are not the target audience. Ideally, I would have let year one and two students read the book and offer feedback but, given the time restraint, this was not possible. I feel that that feedback would have greatly improved my writing, especially because I am an amateur.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 Summary

Australia takes environmental issues very seriously given their unique and often harsh natural surroundings and therefore educating people, especially children, about the environment has become a priority for the Australian government over the past few decades. Numerous EE initiatives have been established in primary schools across the country and in NSW including EEC programs which engage children in sustainability education outside the classroom.

Among the variety of topics covered by EE programs, theorists have argued that sense of place should be the foundation for EE because it incorporates multiple disciplines and gives children tangible examples of how to connect with their surroundings. Furthermore, ecologically literate students are pre-conditioned to grow up to be more committed and environmentally minded citizens.

Literature provides the opportunity to share messages about the environment and sense of place with children in a non-formal and entertaining way. Studies show that literature can be a starting point for more meaningful environmental discussion in and out of the classroom.
Given the importance of EE and sense of place and the effectiveness of literature to teach EE, the purpose of this study was to create a children’s book in order to introduce children to the idea of sense of place in an informal and entertaining way. The story evolved from personal experience and the style and techniques of published authors and seasoned educators. While the book does not have an overtly environmental emphasis, it does incorporate the idea of place through a setting, plot and cast of characters that, hopefully, children can relate to.

6.2 Suggestions for Future Research

In order to determine future directions in children’s environmental education, I feel that much more research needs to be done on what is currently available to children and the ways in which children are taught environmental issues. I was unable to find any other studies that conducted a content analysis of children’s environmental literature. While many studies have analysed children’s books, those with environmental themes seemed to have been left out.

Furthermore, a comprehensive study of environmental education centers in either New South Wales or in other areas of Australia would not only contribute to the improvement of these centers but a study could also be conducted on non-governmental EE centers in order to compare and contrast them with state-run programs. It would be interesting to see the variety of methods used and the topics explored. A more comprehensive evaluation of one or several EECs would also make an interesting project.

I have been interested in how to take this information back to the U.S. One project could study and then design an environmental education project for a school based on the strategies and methods used in Australia.
Finally, while writing a storybook was a great experience, after reading the literature on environmental education, I feel that a more direct way to reach children is needed. If I could design this project over again, I would create a guide book about sense of place that would teach children the key things they should know about their home environment such as where their food comes from and where their waste goes.
Bibliography


Lion, Judith, Lynne Outhred and John Farrell. 1999. *Cry Me a River: Can Literature Influence Children’s Attitudes to the Environment?*. Primary Education. 5(1).


Appendix A : List of Books Used for Qualitative Content Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All the Places to Love</td>
<td>Patricia MacLachlan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Time of Wonder</td>
<td>Robert McCloskey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>Jeannie Baker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Circle of Days</td>
<td>Reeve Lindberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer Shultz's Ducks</td>
<td>Colin Thiele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest of Dreams</td>
<td>Rosemary Wells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gift of the Willows</td>
<td>Helena Clare Pittman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going Home</td>
<td>Eve Bunting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hidden Forest</td>
<td>Jeannie Baker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home in the Sky</td>
<td>Jeannie Baker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lorax</td>
<td>Dr. Seuss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Outback</td>
<td>Annaliese Porter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Rumphius</td>
<td>Barbara Cooney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Goethe's Garden</td>
<td>Diana Cohn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Place</td>
<td>Nadia Wheatley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Place in Space</td>
<td>Robin and Sally Hirst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Less Fish</td>
<td>Kim Toft and Michelle and Allan Sheather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Story of Rosy Dock</td>
<td>Jeannie Baker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voices in the Park</td>
<td>Anthony Browne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Window</td>
<td>Jeannie Baker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I Was Young in the Mountains</td>
<td>Cynthia Rylant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix B: Sample Coding Strategy for “Setting”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Type</th>
<th>Number of Books</th>
<th>Setting Categories</th>
<th>Number of Books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rural (Collapsed)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The outback</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban/big city</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Urban/big city</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park, in a city</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small town</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Small town</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocean</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ocean</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountains</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Number of Books:</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendices C: Observation Guide for Environmental Education Center Excursions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Program Elements Observed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What environmental or place issues does the program teach primary school children?</td>
<td>* Title or theme of the program (either spoken to the children or outlined in teacher material) &lt;br&gt; * Key words and ideas expressed and repeated throughout the lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are stories used to teach about the environment or sense of place?</td>
<td>* The use of written material and/or pictures &lt;br&gt; * Personal stories shared by the teacher &lt;br&gt; * Use of extended analogies to convey a message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What strategies does the teacher use to convey his or her message to the children?</td>
<td>* What language is used and how difficult it is &lt;br&gt; * What interactive strategies the teacher uses to get the children involved in the lesson &lt;br&gt; * The body language used by the teacher &lt;br&gt; * The use of props, including music, costumes, toys and live animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What parts of the program stand out as being particularly exciting to children?</td>
<td>* Children’s reactions to subjects either verbally or non-verbally including laughter, asking questions and listening</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D: Text of “Something Fishy”

Delilah bubbled with excitement as she peered out the train window. She was finally going to visit her Aunt Gina at her mysterious café by the sea. Ever since she was a tiny girl, Delilah had heard rumors that the café was magical. She nearly leapt out of her seat as the train arrived at WATER’S EDGE STATION. She couldn’t wait to finally see the café for herself.

“Aunt Gina!” Delilah gushed as she scrambled off the platform.

“How’s my little lady?” Aunt Gina exclaimed from behind her lime green glasses. “I want to hear all about your summer!”

Aunt Gina gave her niece a huge hug. The two made their way down the winding road toward the ocean.

At the bottom of the hill, the roar of the ocean filled Deliah’s ears.

“This is it, little lady,” her Aunt announced.

Delilah gazed at the little square building perched on the Cliffside. The setting sun lit up the café’s sign that read: SOMETHING FISHY. But before Delilah could peek inside, her Aunt called her over to the cottage behind the café.

“I guess magic-hunting will have to wait until tomorrow,” she thought.

Delilah awoke in the morning to a loud, booming laugh next door. She slipped out of bed and made her way to the café. She was in such a rush, she ran straight into the belly of the café’s cook.

“Well, g’day. You must be Delilah. ‘Name’s Bernie.” The brawny man shook Delilah’s hand so hard she felt dizzy. “Your Aunt’s out,” he continued, “but whaddaya say to helping me make my famous fish stew? You can add the magic ingredient,” he winked.

“Magic?” Delilah said with delight.
But just then, a skinny, freckle-faced boy stumbled through the kitchen door. The smell of fresh fish overwhelmed Delilah.

“Barramundi… scallops…and… pipis,” the boy announced as he lay his goods on the counter.

“Looks good today, Jackson,” Bernie commented. “How’s your dad?”

“Alright,” Jackson replied. “Things are a little slow but we really appreciate your business.” He smiled at Delilah.

“Hi,” Delilah said shyly.

They heard the café door open and Jackson hurried off to make more deliveries. Aunt Gina waltzed in with a bouquet of wildflowers.

“Let’s get going, little lady,” she said. “We’ve got a very busy day.” Aunt Gina pointed to the line of customers forming outside the café. Delilah spent the rest of the day and the days that followed helping out around the restaurant. She filled lolly jars, made fishcakes and even looked for pipis with Jackson. She began to feel at home in the sunny café with its rainbow-colored tables and panoramic ocean view.

Then, one night, after her Aunt was asleep, Delilah crept out of the bed and tip-toed over to the café.

“I’ve got to find out what makes this place magical,” she thought.

The once cheery dining room looked eerie in the moonlight and Delilah suddenly felt nervous. In a panic, she tried to run back out the door but she ran SMACK! into the back wall instead.

“Ouch,” Delilah winced, rubbing her head.

As her eyes adjusted, she saw that the wall was filled with postcards, all addressed to her Aunt.
“Wow,” she thought, reading the cards. “All these people really love this café.” Delilah instantly felt comforted. There really was something special about the place…

“DELILAH!” Aunt Gina yelled. “Get up, little lady! We’re throwing a party today!” Delilah opened her eyes and realized she had fallen asleep on the café floor! All around her people with balloons and flowers, cakes and biscuits were rushing in and out. Above the door an enormous banner read: HAPPY BIRTHDAY ALISON!

Delilah was quickly swept up in the excitement and before long, heaps of people filled the small café. Even Jackson and his dad came to join the festivities. Out of the corner of her eye, Delilah could see a radiant smile on her Aunt’s face. Aunt Gina winked at her niece as music began to play and everyone started dancing.

Many hours later, Delilah and Aunt Gina lay on the café floor among crumpled wrapping paper.

“What a great party, huh, little lady?” Aunt Gina yawned. Delilah nodded sleepily.

“Aunt Gina,” Delilah paused, “Why do people say this place is magical?”

Aunt Gina chuckled. “You see that photo on the wall?” she said, pointing to a large, golden frame. “This place used to be a run-down beach shack.”

“That’s Something Fishy?” Delilah’s eyes widened.

“That was,” Aunt Gina told her, “before the people of this town helped me restore it. They believed in me, and my dream of owning a café on the water. And now look at it!”

Delilah looked at the picture, then at the confetti-covered café. She smiled.

“I guess a lot of magic does happen here,” she said.
Delilah woke up early the next morning to catch her train home. After hugging Bernie and Jackson goodbye, she and her Aunt made the trek up the hill to the station. Before boarding the train, she took one last look back at the café.

“Aunt Gina, can I come visit again next summer?” Delilah asked.

“Anytime, little lady,” Aunt Gina replied, “anytime.”

Author’s Note:

We all have special places where we feel at home, like we belong. Maybe it’s a café, a park or a community center. Maybe you haven’t found that magical place yet. Maybe you’re just getting to know it. Whatever your situation, take the time to explore where you live. What makes it unique? What are the people like? Share what you find out with your friends and family. You might just learn something about yourself in the process.