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The

Poetry
of

EARTH




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The
Poetry
 of
EARTH




**A Collection of Poetry
 About the Earth and Its Creatures**

illustrated by Pamela Sanchez

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Editor: Tracy Moncure

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Introduction

The Poetry of Earth is an anthology of poetry about the earth and its inhabitants. The collection is divided into four units covering animals, plants, the land, weather, and endangered elements. We know that these poems will provide endless hours of listening enjoyment and will serve as springboards for innumerable activities and experiences. To help you get started, you will find a general essay on using poetry in the classroom, which begins on page 63, and page-by-page annotations with specific ideas for each poem.

Among the poets in this anthology you will find the world's best: Carl Sandburg, Robert Louis Stevenson, Lilian Moore, Christina Rossetti, Myra Cohn Livingston, Walt Whitman, and Conrad Aiken. Each poem reflects the poet's love and respect for the earth.

Dr. Leland Jacobs, poet and educator, reminds us that although some people profess to dislike poetry, there is at least one poem or rhyme that's tucked away in a corner of most everyone's memory. It's there because, for whatever reason, it meant something at the time we heard it or read it. You will find many of your favorites in this anthology.

Our goal is to provide children with endless opportunities to enrich their lives through poetry. This collection can do that—whether you read the poems to the children or they read the poems themselves. We hope that *The Poetry of Earth* becomes a joyful part of every day for you and your children.

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Sharing This Place:

Animals of the Earth



From Year to Year

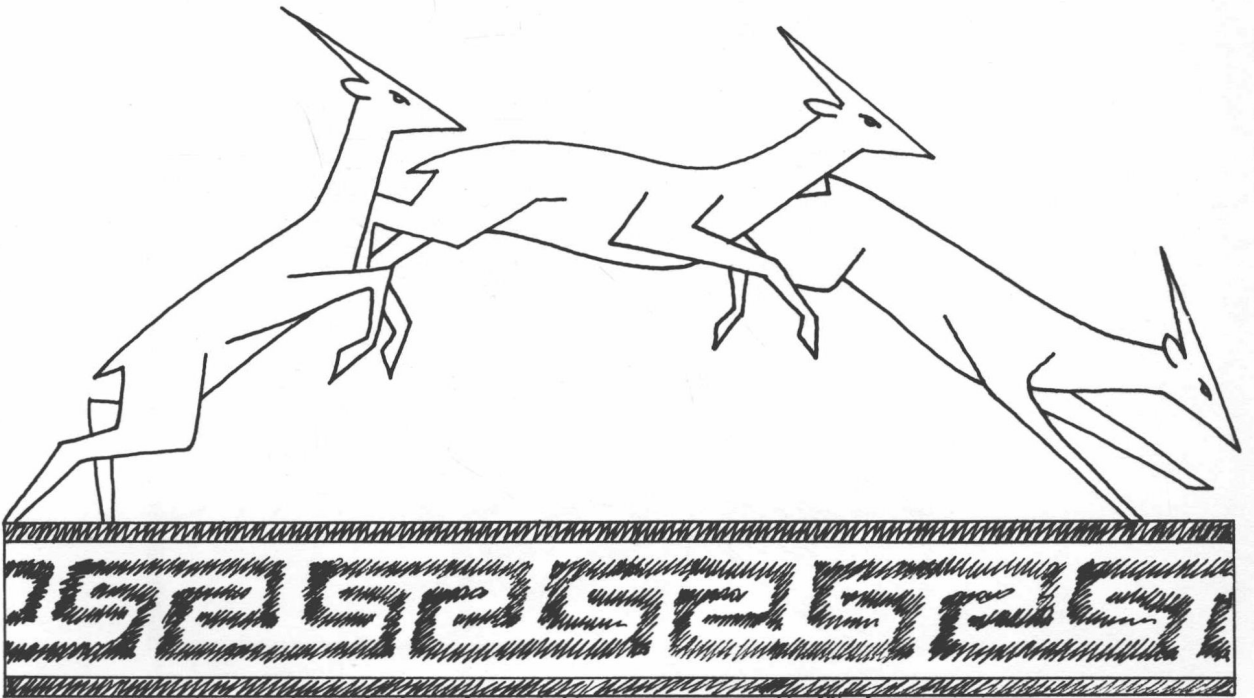
From year to year,
you live and grow
between earth and sky.
Here is your home.
Others live here, too.
They are near,
all around you,
sharing this place
with you.

Joanne Ryder

Swift Things Are Beautiful

Swift things are beautiful:
Swallows and deer,
And lightning that falls
Bright-veined and clear,
Rivers and meteors,
Wind in the wheat,
The strong-withered horse,
The runner's sure feet.

Elizabeth Coatsworth

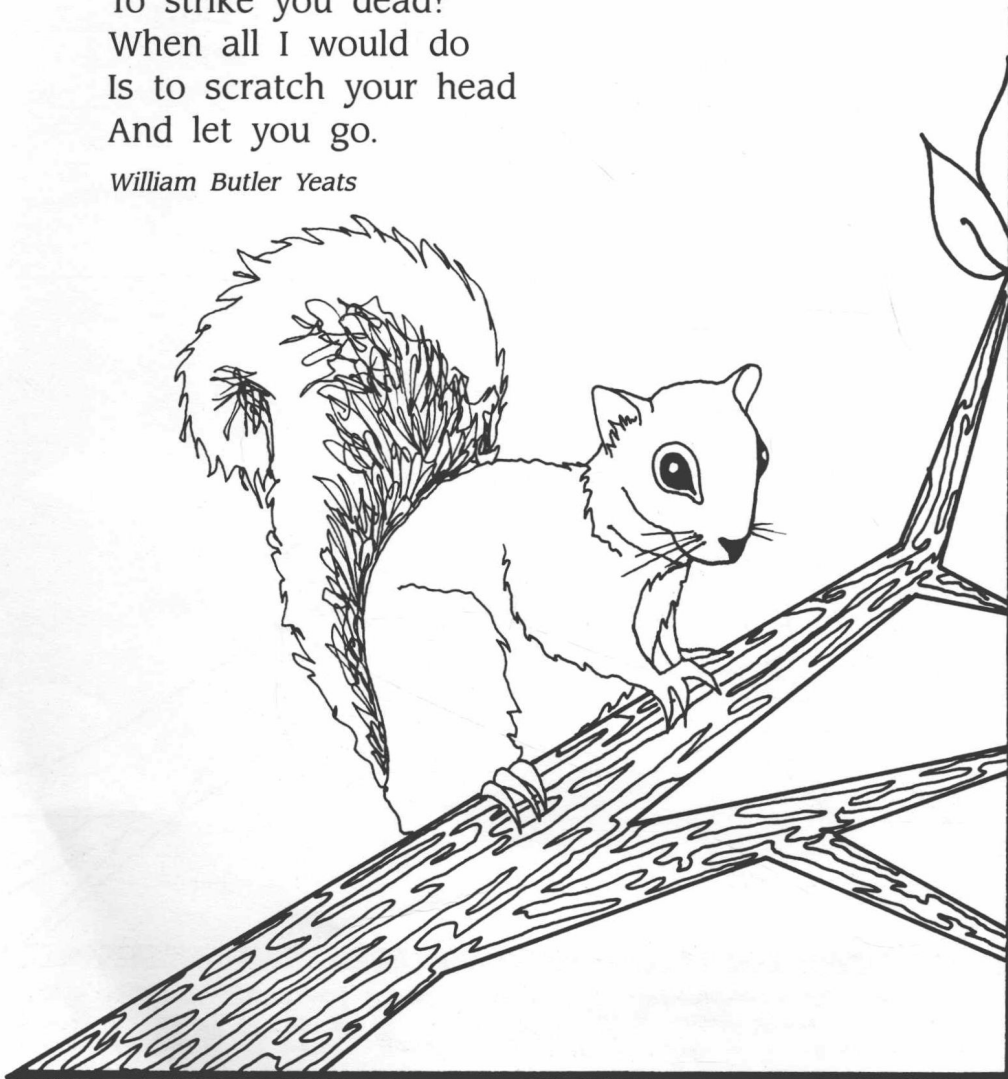


Swift Things Are Beautiful: Talk about other things in nature that are swift and other words that mean the same or nearly the same as *swift*. You might also want to talk about things that are not swift. Encourage the children to write their own poems about movement in nature and bind the poems together in a class book.

To a Squirrel at Kyle-Na-No

Come play with me;
Why should you run
Through the shaking tree
As though I'd a gun
To strike you dead?
When all I would do
Is to scratch your head
And let you go.

William Butler Yeats

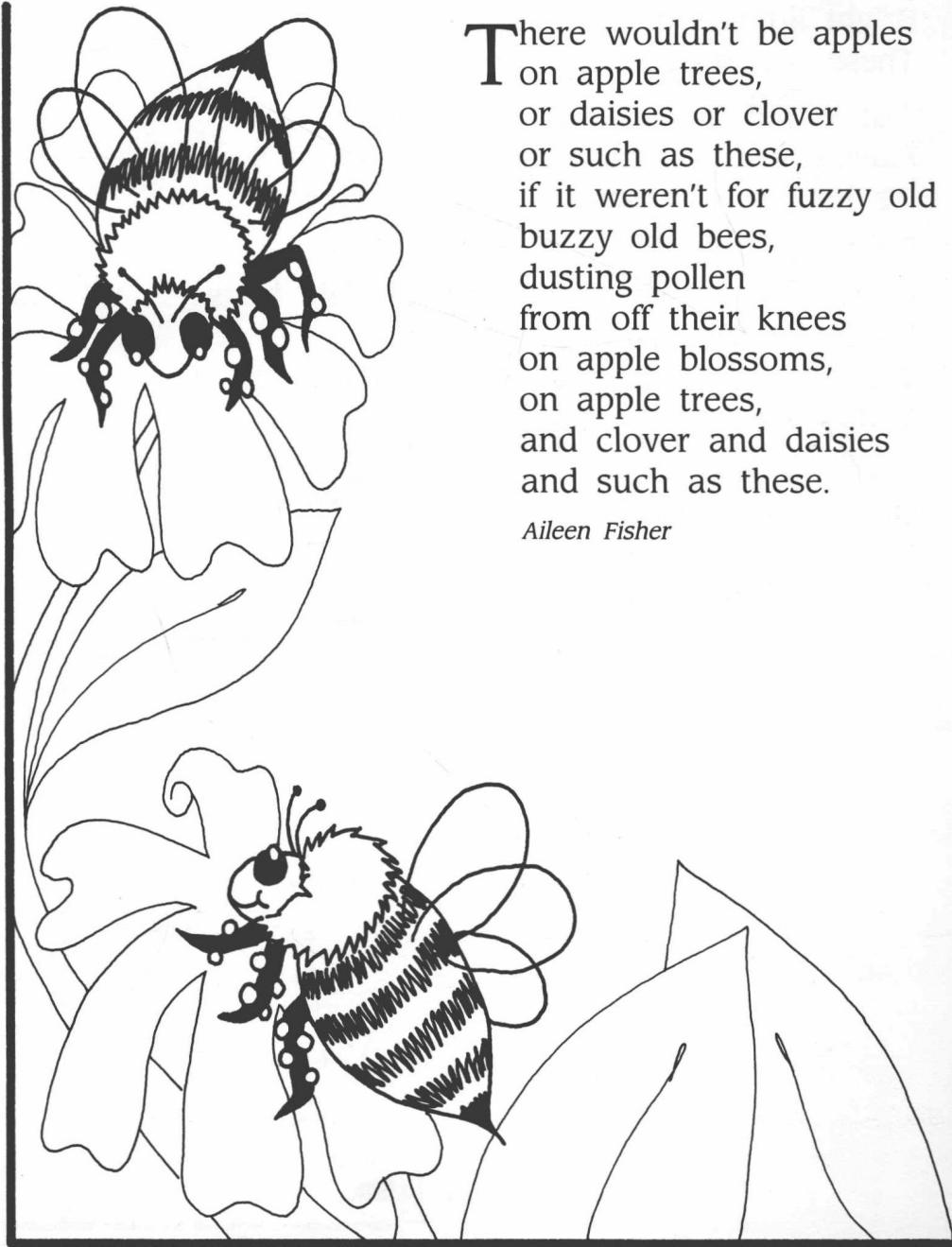


To a Squirrel at Kyle-Na-No: Most children have watched and perhaps tried to feed or touch squirrels. Encourage them to share their experiences and fascination. Talk about how to treat animals in the wild and whether it is advisable to touch them.

Buzzy Old Bees

There wouldn't be apples
on apple trees,
or daisies or clover
or such as these,
if it weren't for fuzzy old
buzzy old bees,
dusting pollen
from off their knees
on apple blossoms,
on apple trees,
and clover and daisies
and such as these.

Aileen Fisher



Buzzy Old Bees: The bee is a wonderful example of an environmental chain. Create a diagram that illustrates the links in this chain. What happens when the chain is broken? Books: (young and middle readers) *The Life Cycle of a Bee* by Jill Bailey (Watts, 1990); (older readers) *The Clover & the Bee: A Book of Pollination* by Anne Ophelia Dowden (Crowell, 1990).

Grasshopper Green

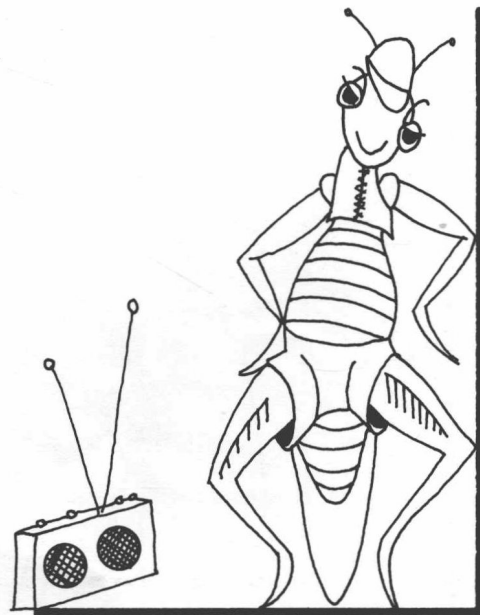
Grasshopper Green is a comical chap;
He lives on the best of fare.
Bright little trousers, jacket, and cap,
These are his summer wear.

Out in the meadow he loves to go,
Playing away in the sun;
It's hopperty, skipperty, high and low,
Summer's the time for fun.

Grasshopper Green has a quaint little house;
It's under the hedge so gay.
Grandmother Spider, as still as a mouse,
Watches him over the way.

Gladly he's calling the children, I know,
Out in the beautiful sun;
It's hopperty, skipperty, high and low,
Summer's the time for fun.

Author Unknown



Grasshopper Green: What a fun poem to illustrate for a big book! Or perhaps the children would like to build models of Grasshopper Green's house. The grasshopper is so delightfully personified in this poem that you will probably be inspired to think of other "people" things a grasshopper might do in summer. You might also use this poem with young children as an introduction to movement activities.

The Ways of Living Things

There is wonder past all wonder
in the ways of living things,
in a worm's intrepid wriggling,
in the song a blackbird sings,

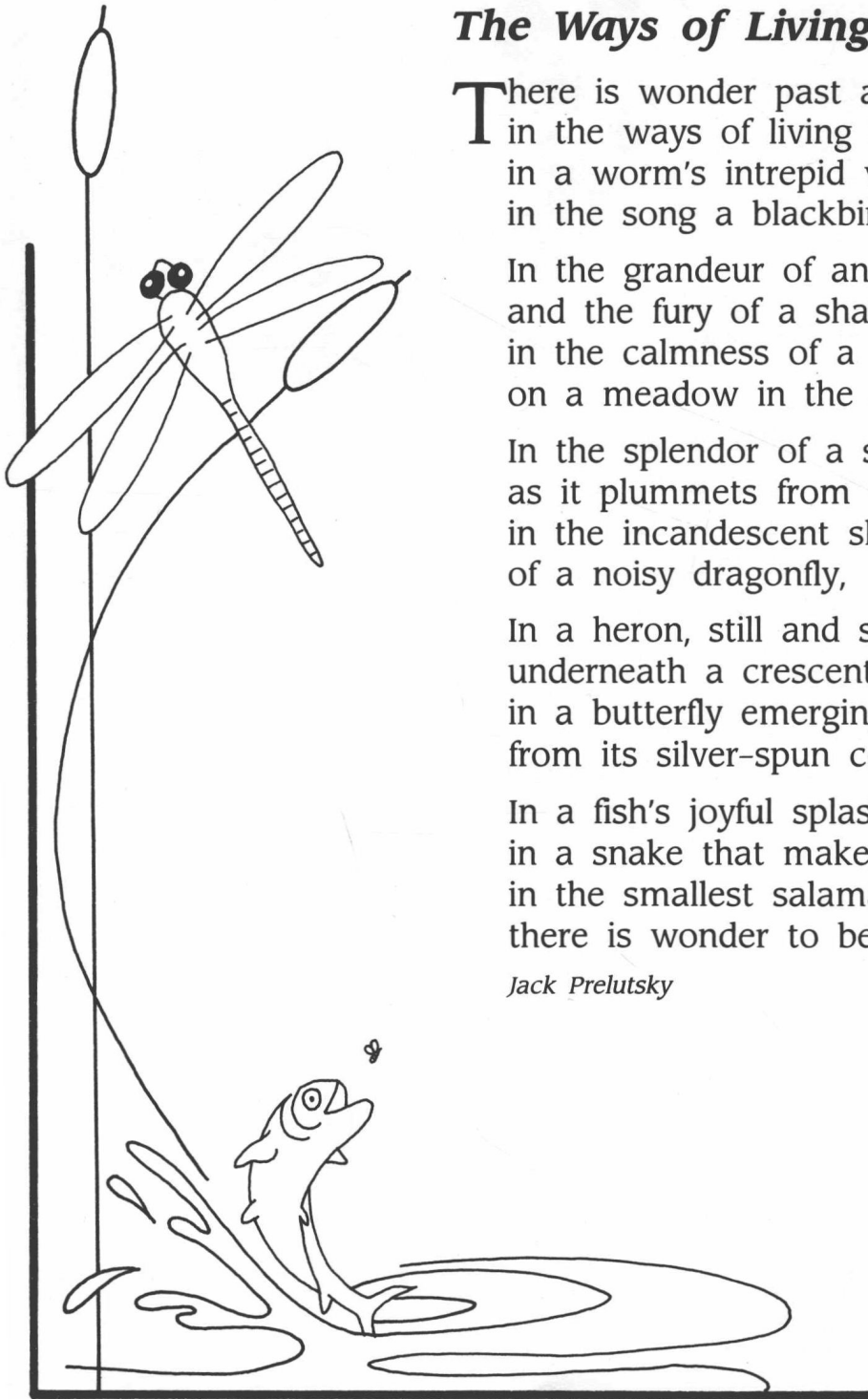
In the grandeur of an eagle
and the fury of a shark,
in the calmness of a tortoise
on a meadow in the dark,

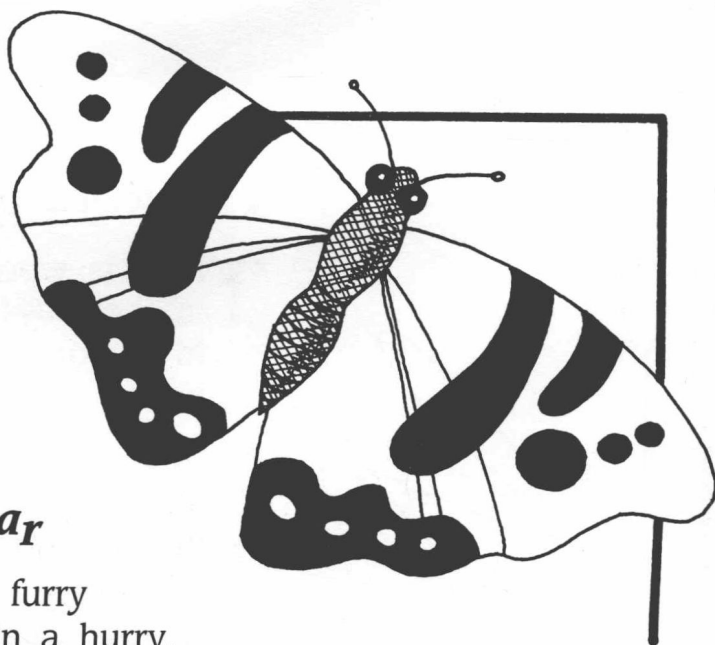
In the splendor of a sea gull
as it plummets from the sky,
in the incandescent shimmer
of a noisy dragonfly,

In a heron, still and silent
underneath a crescent moon,
in a butterfly emerging
from its silver-spun cocoon.

In a fish's joyful splashing,
in a snake that makes no sound,
in the smallest salamander
there is wonder to be found.

Jack Prelutsky





Caterpillar

Brown and furry
Caterpillar in a hurry,
Take your walk
To the shady leaf, or stalk,
Or what not,
Which may be the chosen spot.
No toad spy you,
Hovering bird of prey pass by you;
Spin and die,
To live again a butterfly.

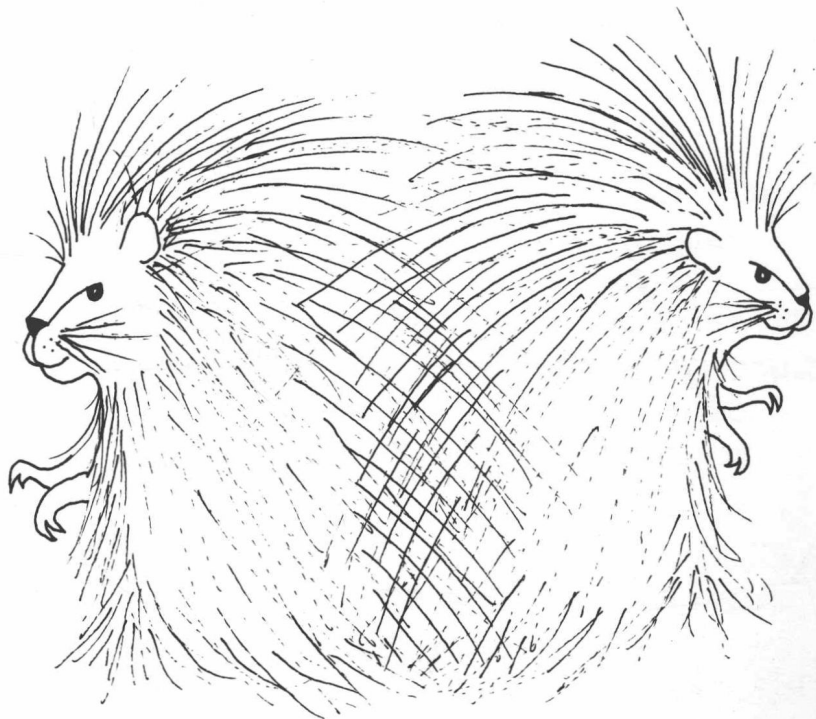
Christina Rossetti



Backward Running Porcupines

Backward running porcupines
are angry mean and quick.
Meeting one behind, before,
beware, be off, don't stick
Around or you get stuck. Bad luck.
So cover ground, my friend,
For if you do not get away
you get it in the end.

Mary Ann Hoberman



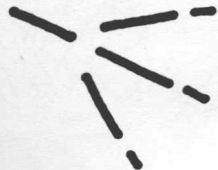
Backward Running Porcupines: Great fun with words! Do porcupines really run backward when they're angry? Do they "throw" their quills? What other ways do animals defend themselves? Books: (all ages) *Hugh Pine* (Houghton, 1980) and *Hugh Pine and the Good Place* (Houghton, 1986) both by Janwillem van de Wetering; (younger and middle readers) *Color and Camouflage* by Rachel Wright (Watts, 1990); (older readers) *Animal Defenses* by Malcolm Penny (Watts, 1988).

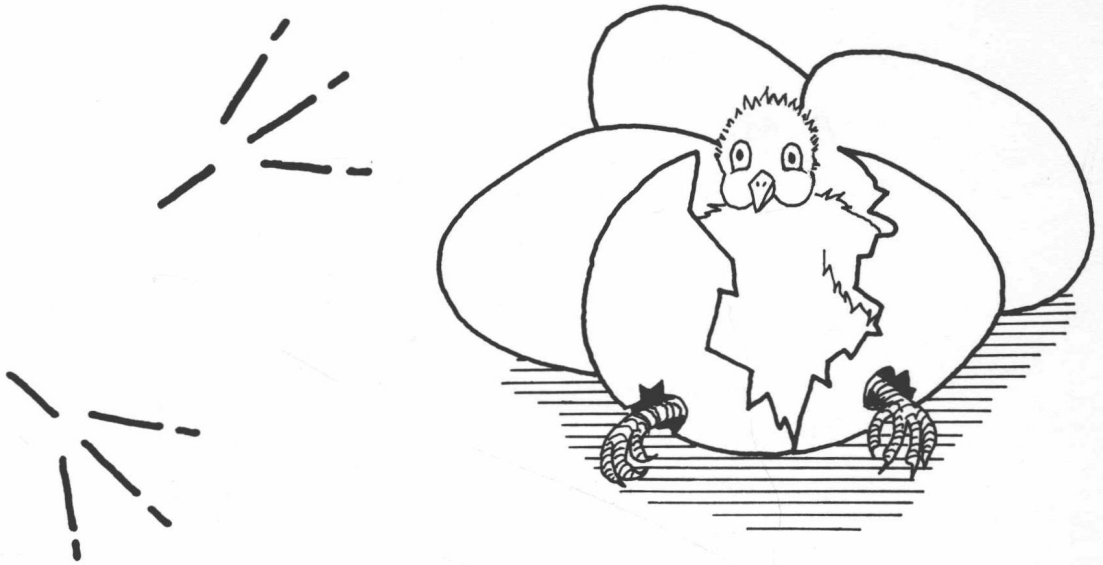
The Importance of Eggs

I've broken lots of eggs, I guess.
The ones in pockets make a mess,
The ones on floors don't clean up well,
The older ones may leave a smell.

Eggs in a bag when dropped won't splash;
The thrown egg will—a yellow smash.
Big double handfuls from the nest
Are eggs that break the easiest.

All boiled eggs shatter. You can peel
The pieces off. I like the feel
Of peeled boiled eggs, but like the look
Of eggs we neither break nor cook—





These incubator eggs in trays
Behind the glass. Whoever stays
Around to see the chicks peck through
Their shells at hatching time? I do.

Of all egg-breakers, Number One
Is Mr. Chick. When he's begun,
And you can see his little bill
Poke, poke, and figure how he will
Turn around inside his prison-house,
As nimble as a nibbling mouse,
Until he's back where he began:

You'll have respect for eggs, young man.
For then, with one good final kick,
There is no egg, but just a chick.

David McCord